THE MAN HIMSELF

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THE MAN HIMSELF

THE NAZARENE

BOOKS BY
ROLLIN LYNDE HARTT

CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN
THE MAN HIMSELF
UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH

THE MAN HIMSELF

BY

ROLLIN LYNDE HARTT

McCORMICK
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FOREWORD

BEGINNING at the beginning and keeping on uninterruptedly to the very end, I have been reading a heretical book. It upsets theologies. It demolishes creeds. It sweeps away traditions with a recklessness altogether amazing. It is called the Bible.

During three years of my youth I was a student at a famous divinity school. There no one had read the Bible all through uninterruptedly from beginning to end. It was not the way. The way was to read it a passage at a time.

But the isolated passage, like a detached fragment of a mosaic, invites endless misinterpretation. It is only when one sets aside the evenings of three months and reads the Bible all through from beginning to end uninterruptedly that the Bible reveals its nature, its purpose, and its meaning. It reveals them clearly then. It requires no interpreter save the open mind—that is to say, a mind

able to divest itself of prepossessions and read what is plainly written in plain words.

Toward the end, a sublime figure emerges—a figure so incomparably majestic that not even the admixtures of legend and metaphysics in his biographies—no, nor the theological addenda contributed by primitive and naïvely incautious propagandists—can hide his greatness.

A strange personality he will seem at first, so little are we accustomed to hear anything believable about him, anything understandable, anything that can bring him at all close to us. And a strange personality he was. Much that he believed, no living man believes. Yet, simply by reading the Bible all through uninterruptedly, one comes to see why he believed as he did. By the same simple method one comes to see that the man himself, far from dwindling when legendary and metaphysical accretions are erased from his biography, takes on a grandeur no theology has ever succeeded in giving him.

In the following pages this will not at first be apparent. Unavoidably, the first impression will be one of strangeness. But in due course it will

be seen that the strangeness is the result purely of his Orientalism and of the exceedingly long period separating his time from our own, whereas his greatness gives him a commanding universality and a leadership not only modern but so very far in advance of modernity, as to put modernity to shame.

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I

A YOUNG rabbi, early in the First Century, A.D., announced that, after his death but before the generation then living had passed away, he would come in the clouds with power and great glory and send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather his elect from the four winds. Sun and moon were to be darkened, and the stars to fall from heaven.

Even when haled before the high priest for examination, he declared that he would one day be seen sitting on the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

As to the exact time, he was reticent, though he told his pupils that Jews standing before him would be still alive when he returned to judge the world.

All four of his biographers credit him with such utterances. They re-echo in the letters from propagandists to early coteries of believers. He was to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The time was near. The end of all things was at hand. A letter to Timothy implies that Timothy himself would live to witness the event.

Theologians pass lightly over all this. Critics assume as lightly that belief in the young rabbi's second coming developed only after his martyrdom and was then unwarrantably attributed to him. Whereas the idea was old and essential to Messiahship. A prophet long venerated by the Jews had predicted that one like unto a son of man would come with the clouds; that dominion and glory and a kingdom would be given him; and that all the peoples, nations, and languages would serve him. This son of man the young rabbi claimed to be.

It was not only the most astounding claim ever made, and a claim left unfulfilled when the time set by the young rabbi had expired; it embodied a conception that explains why he died without ever having attempted to found a new religion,

why he declined to deal with social questions, even the most urgent, and why he never committed his philosophy to writing. He was coming back soon to sit on the throne of his glory and judge all nations. His immediate aim, therefore, was to warn as many individuals as he could, and, by teaching a new and beautiful way of life, incomparably nobler than any then aspired to, show them how they might escape retribution. He went about it on foot.

Profoundly read in Jewish literature, though profoundly uncritical in his interpretation, he believed also that he must seek a martyr's death. For the prophets, when declaring that the cleansing wrath of God was to descend upon a single generation, had personified that generation as the servant of God, whose sufferings would atone for the sins of past generations and assure the felicity of generations yet to come. The figurative servant of God would then be bruised for our transgressions, that by his stripes we might be healed.

Taking this literally, and confusing it with the idea of Messiahship, the young rabbi applied it to himself. Hence his plan, announced to his pupils

on more than one occasion, of eventually going up to Jerusalem, where by affronting the ecclesiastical grandees to make sure of their hostility and by permitting himself to be hailed as king of the Jews to make sure of hostility among departmental chieftains representing the Roman colonial office, the desired martyrdom was obtained.

This sounds like obsession. It was not. It was religious genius manifesting itself in the enthusiasm of a young Jewish scholar. For he had conceived a new idea of God as a power making for righteousness and of religion as the life of God in the soul of man. No one else in the entire world of Jewish rabbinism recognized any such idea. It was overwhelming, this consciousness of a divine indwelling—a consciousness vouchsafed to him alone. It led him to ask, "Who am I—what am I—if not indeed the Messiah foretold in prophecy?" The rôle was prepared. He assumed it. To speak more accurately, it thrust itself upon him.

From that day forward he fitted himself into the prophecy, and his Jewish scholarship aided him in so doing. What the tendencies of that scholarship were is to be seen in the ease with

which his followers, later on, fitted him still further into prophecy.

It was they who had him born in Bethlehem, that prophecy might be fulfilled, although he was a Nazarene. It was they who had him born of a virgin because a virgin birth is foretold in an ancient scroll—its fulfilment is related in the same scroll, but this was no deterrent. Again, it was they who had him carried into Egypt when a babe, as a prophet had written that out of Egypt God would call his son.

Not content with fitting him into prophecy, they found in his martyrdom an analogy with the Jewish sacrificial system, and provided angelic choruses to praise the Lamb that was slain, and evolved a dogma that still retains a dignified, albeit precarious, standing in theology—the Atonement.

Such phenomena, though unimportant in and of themselves, show how it was possible for a young rabbi, alone in his overwhelming conception of God as a power making for righteousness and of religion as the life of God in the soul of man, should undertake to transmute into fact and deed as well as sublime expectation his understanding of

the Messianic mission—that is to say, invite martyrdom in the belief that beyond martyrdom lay the certainty of his second coming, not only as the judge of all tribes and kindreds, but as their Messianic ruler. The thing had in it less of self-deception than of heroic self-transfiguration.

When once we see where he got the belief in his second coming, how naturally he accepted it, and with what facility he passed it on to his followers, it becomes difficult to comprehend why critics refuse to acknowledge that the young rabbi ever held such a belief, especially as refusal creates new problems, impossible of solution.

Again, it is difficult to comprehend why theologians treat the young rabbi's cardinal idea as something to be explained away. Here and there, to be sure, a stray sect still awaits its accomplishment, though the time limit specifically set for that accomplishment expired many centuries ago without result. But the usual device is to opine sophistically that the young rabbi came again on the occasion when, according to legend, tongues of fire appeared upon the heads of certain devotees. Or, we are told that the young rabbi returns constantly

in the hearts of believers—which is true, figuratively. But this is not what he meant when he spoke of stars falling, the sun and moon darkened, angels thronging, trumpets sounding, and himself descending, with a shout, to sit upon a throne, judge the nations, and rule them—all this within the lifetime of his hearers.

Indeed, were not the motives of theologians above suspicion, one might suppose that these excellent gentlemen had conspired to prevent our beholding what manner of man the young rabbi was and to present in his place a fictional unreality whom, generation after generation, the bulk of our race would scorn. For this is what happens. A mistaken reverence, by covering up his own clearly enunciated beliefs regarding himself and by elaborating instead an incredible metaphysic he never taught, never accepted, and never so much as dreamed of, has veiled from humanity the supreme religious genius of all time. It has made him what he was not. It has falsified him, and then wondered why the world rejects Christianity.

If the world rejects Christianity, it is because Christianity first rejected its Lord.

II

THE young rabbi had a trade. He was a carpenter. But it was customary for rabbis to have trades; Saul, rechristened Paul, made tents. Carpentry by no means marked the man of Nazareth as different from other rabbis, nor, in certain respects, did his teachings. He lived and died a Jew. He had not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. Nothing would have astonished him more than to hear that the world would one day acclaim him as the founder of a new religion.

He endorsed ceremonialism—ate the Passover on the day of unleavened bread, bade a former leper go show himself to the priest, and sanctioned the Jewish sacrificial system by commanding his followers to offer gifts at the altar. To be sure, he named the condition under which gifts were to be made. If you were offering a gift at the altar and there remembered that your brother had

something against you, you were to leave your gift before the altar and go your way. You must first be reconciled to your brother and then offer your gift. But in the very naming of this condition, he implied that the sacrificial system was to be retained.

Once, and once only, so far as we can learn, he spoke of some day founding a church, with Peter as its cornerstone, though the real cornerstone of Christianity was not Peter but Paul, and though the church the Nazarene sought to found was not to be outside the Jewish religious organization, but within it, and a strange sort of church even then—that is, if it could in any sense of the word be called a church. Really, it could not. Individuals were to be rescued from narrowness, from bigotry, from a crude dependence upon mere formalism, and shown that God was a power making for righteousness and that religion was nothing less than the life of God in the soul of man. In a word, the young rabbi sought to infuse spirituality into a Judaism that had never known a high spirituality and was moving further and further away from spirituality every day.

There is a profound spirituality in the old Jewish classics if you read into them a meaning their authors never intended. The old Jewish hymns, for example, overflow with such phrases as "My rock and my salvation." But what, strictly speaking, was salvation, and what, strictly speaking, was Judaism? Did it present God as a power making for righteousness and religion as the life of God in the soul of man? Had it in it, anywhere, the beauty, the inspiration, the moral grandeur that could ever rightly have entitled the Old Testament to be bound up in the same volume with the New?

In brief, the Old Testament teaches that God is a great man; that he is very fond of the smell of burning meat; and that, if you burn enough meat, he will give you length of days, numerous children, excellent health, success over your enemies, prosperity in business, and a triumphant career for your militarized—not to say Prussianized—country. He promises temporal rewards only, as death ends all, and he promises those rewards only to Jews. But even these faithful, meat-burning Jews must obey thousands of infinitely precise laws

regulating diet and ceremonies and, now and then, morals. In so doing they receive no help from a power making for righteousness. They are not aided by the life of God in the soul of man.

It is true that, in these Jewish classics, one finds occasional gleams of what to-day we call religion; yet in the First Century, A.D., Jewish thought dwelt, not upon those, but upon the thousands of infinitely precise laws. The scribes and Pharisees, whose vulgar literalism filled the man of Nazareth with indignation, were fast banishing spirituality and establishing in its place a code of practice and observance that had remarkably little to do with morals and had still less to do with religion.

To what lengths Jewish literalism would go is shown by the minutes of certain rabbinical discussions during this period. Was it lawful to step on a grain of corn on the Sabbath day? No, for stepping on a grain of corn is a kind of threshing, and threshing is a kind of work, and work was forbidden on the Sabbath day. Again, was it lawful to catch a flea on the Sabbath day? No, for catching a flea was a kind of hunting, and hunting was

a kind of work. Still again, was it lawful to eat on Sunday the egg a hen had laid on Saturday? No, for the hen had broken the Sabbath.

A more complicated problem: Might a man with a wooden leg walk about on the Sabbath, and, if so, how far might he walk? His wooden leg was a burden, and carrying a burden was a kind of work. However, an old chronicle said that when the Jews were nomads, every Jew was required to go to the tabernacle on the Sabbath day. As the dimensions of the Jewish camp were known, and as it was known that the sacred tent stood in the middle of the camp, the farthest distance any Jew had to go could be determined. Find that distance, and you knew how far a man with a wooden leg could walk without desecrating Saturday.

Almost as quaint discussions broke out among the early Christians when they worried over the ethics of eating scraps of beef and mutton left over from the pagan sacrificial ceremonies and offered for sale at a bargain. Paul, it will be remembered, gently poked fun at this ethical super-fussiness among Christians, but told them that, if they were so terribly in earnest about it,

themselves, he would eat no such scraps while the world stood.

Among the Jews, however, literalism and extreme legalism were not merely making religion absurd, they were supplanting it. So the man of Nazareth saw that the first step toward spiritualizing the religious life of his time would be to assail literalism and extreme legalism both by word and by deed. He denounced the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, as blind leaders of the blind, as whited sepulchres, and as false pedagogues, replacing God's commands with the teachings of men. He even broke their Sabbath—purposely—and declared that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

But observe. Against the Sabbath itself, as originally ordained, he brought no criticism. It was made for man. He would as soon have thought of criticizing the Passover, or the right of priests to determine whether a leper was cured, or the duty of the faithful to lay gifts on the altar.

True, he criticized many a passage in the old Jewish classics—the one about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, for example—but seldom

more harshly than certain contributors to those same classics had criticized them, and toward the Old Testament as a whole he showed a reverence far exceeding its deserts. From it he drew virtually his entire education. He quoted it freely, though sometimes innocently misinterpreting it. He had unlimited faith in its prophecies, and upon them based his claim to Messiahship.

He was never in a mood to overthrow the Jewish church. It was his own church—to the last. He was never in a mood to overthrow any institution. Why should he have been? Soon—indeed, before the generation then living had passed away—the end of all things was to come, with stars falling, sun and moon darkened, angels thronging, trumpets sounding, and himself descending from the clouds with a shout and sitting upon the throne of his glory to judge all nations and reign in Messianic majesty.

His immediate mission was to warn the greatest possible number of individuals and to tell them how unfailingly the consciousness of a divine indwelling transforms character, so that, as if born again, they might be found worthy of a place at his right hand when he returned.

III

THE man from Nazareth allowed his pupils to call him rabbi, though, when speaking of himself, he claimed a loftier rank—that of prophet.

However, he was a new type of prophet, wholly unlike the Hebrew dervishes who, from of old, had assumed that, in order to be believed, they must begin with incredible stories about their call to preach.

Isaiah, for instance, tells us he saw God, who was sitting on a throne in the temple, with a number of six-winged angels attending him. Then came a great rumbling and much smoke. Isaiah trembled, for though a man of unclean lips, he had looked upon God. But presently a six-winged angel flew to Isaiah with a live coal from the altar, and touched the coal to his lips. Then, when ordered to turn prophet, Isaiah no longer hesitated.

Jeremiah in his turn saw God, and God's very hand touched his lips, but of all the prophets Eze-

kiel enjoyed by far the most spectacular initiation. Out of the north came a fiery cloud, and out of the cloud four extraordinary creatures, each having four wings and four faces—the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. Meanwhile, the candidate saw wheels, and wheels within wheels, the colour of beryl and full of eyes. Also he beheld a crystal firmament, and there, seated on a sapphire throne and surrounded by a rainbow, was God. Ezekiel fell on his face, remaining in this posture until he had received holy orders.

In passing, we may remark that there have been more plausible dervishes than Ezekiel; at least once, the attentive reader will catch him predicting an event after its occurrence.

But the prophet of Nazareth was no dervish. He was no charlatan. He relates no story of a miraculous call to preach, and, although his biographers report a very beautiful and romantically symbolic legend about the dove that descended upon him at his baptism, the symbolism would have been more precise if the dove had descended upon him at his birth.

For he was by nature a prophet—that is to say, a prophet in the derivative sense of the word: one who speaks for God. The old Hebrew dervishes prefaced their utterances with the formula, "Thus saith the Lord." The prophet of Nazareth prefaced his with the formula, "Verily, verily I say unto you." It was not egotism. It expressed his profound consciousness of the divine indwelling—a consciousness no other religious teacher of his day possessed and, therefore, a consciousness that forbade him ever to doubt for one moment his right to command. He felt, just as all supreme religious geniuses feel, that his own highest ideals were identical with the thoughts of God himself.

Nor did he plunge into politics. The old-time dervishes set up as political advisers, and took the place of statesmen-journalists. They were thunderers. They fulminated against this or that proposed alliance, pictured the horrors of threatened invasion, and, sometimes addressing the general public and sometimes memorializing the throne, endeavoured to run the country. Not infrequently they succeeded.

On at least one occasion the prophet of Nazareth

was asked to give his views on matters political. Ought, or ought not, the Jews to recognize the Roman occupation by paying taxes? Seriously, might it not be nobler to go in for passive resistance?

Any one can guess what Isaiah would have replied—or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. But the man of Nazareth told them to render unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's—in short, to pay—and changed the subject.

He was no patriot. Though his biographers call him a descendant of King David (the same biographers who deny that he had a human father trace his genealogy on his human father's side) he acquiesced calmly in the degradation of King David's former realm. Without the smallest scruple he consorted with tax-gatherers in the hire of the Roman colonial office, and one of these publicans figures illustriously in a parable of his.

What matter if Palestine writhed beneath the heel of Imperial Rome? Soon there would be no longer a Palestine and no longer an Imperial Rome. The end of all things was at hand. So why concern one's self about patriotism and tributes

and publicans—mere transitory questions not worth considering? The only thing really worth considering was, how to prepare individuals to escape condemnation at his hands when the time arrived for his second coming as the world's judge and Messianic ruler. These strangers he met by the wayside or addressed on hilltops or on the shores of lakes—behold, they were the same strangers whose eternal destiny he must decide. To warn them, to teach them, to show them God as a power making for righteousness and religion as the life of God in the soul of man, and thus to transform their characters—this was his sole aim and purpose. How could he tramp far enough over painful roads? How could he spend himself more completely in that most exhausting work, the work of preaching?

The old Hebrew dervishes never toiled in that style. They wrote. It was their readers who toiled. Whole passages in the prophets burn with poetic inspiration; other whole passages, not a few, rise above mediocrity; but in the main, what dreariness, what prolixity, what repetition! The prophet of Nazareth wrote nothing. No one pre-

tends that he wrote. Sayings of his were written down by no one knows whom—and the book perished. A part of the sayings—how large a part it is impossible to guess—got copied into his biographies later on. But he, himself, depended entirely upon his preaching—his own, and that of mendicant friars whom he had trained to preach.

Just this failure to leave behind him a personal memoir and a personal statement of belief duly signed has placed his biography at the mercy of fantastic legend-mongers, subjected his teaching to misinterpretation, and bred strifes innumerable among his followers. It has enabled theologians to make him a god—so incredible a god that the world in general has always refused to believe. It has enabled ecclesiasticism to erect quasi-imperial systems whose sway entailed wars without number. It has split his followers into hundreds of incompatible sects. It has garbled his teachings until minutiæ are paramount and fundamentals lost sight of. It has rendered possible a world-wide misunderstanding of the man himself—who he was, what he was, and the meaning of his superb

idealism. All this a mere pamphlet from his pen would have prevented.

Why did he never write one? Simply because he was unable to foresee that the world would last long enough to need it. He was going up to Jerusalem, soon, to invite martyrdom. Not long after his death he was to return. That he was founding a new religion that would go on, indefinitely, evolving strange theologies, building cathedrals, forming vast organizations, and reconstructing society, never occurred to him. The end of all things was at hand.

Only by taking seriously his belief in his second coming—the belief he got from the old Jewish classics and bequeathed to his own pupils and in turn to theirs—can we determine what manner of man he was. He held that belief with entire conviction. It was his central idea. All his other ideas radiated from it. That it was never realized, is immaterial. It gave him his mission, and, little though he suspected it, his mission is important beyond anything the Messiahship ever so much as suggested.

IV

PROPHETS had always been self-appointed—upstart laymen assuming to speak for God—and dependent on signs and wonders to draw and impress a crowd. The queerer the signs and wonders, the bigger and more credulous was the following a prophet secured. Isaiah went naked three years. Hosea married a prostitute. John the Baptist wore an outlandish costume and subsisted upon an even more outlandish diet.

According to legend, the prophet of Nazareth set up as a magician, turning water into wine, stilling tempests, walking on the sea, and feeding multitudes so lavishly with next to nothing at all that it was a struggle to gather up the leavings. Theology has seen in these legends a proof that he was a god, though very much more astonishing legends cluster about the entirely human Jewish dervishes, one of whom caused the sun to stand still.

No such magical performances were attempted

by the Nazarene. Instead, he drew and impressed the crowd by exercising a gift we are at last coming to understand—the gift, that is to say, of healing. He was a psychotherapist.

Like other Jews of his day he held quaint notions about disease. For example, he thought that lunatics were infested with demons. But the technique he employed in treating disease was curiously modern—in fact, ultra-modern and resembling the kind of thing we call "advanced."

It required absolute faith on the practitioner's part, and as absolute a faith on the patient's part. Moreover, it involved a free use of suggestion. The practitioner would loudly rebuke a fever. He would loudly rebuke a mania. He would impress the imagination through the senses by touching a patient or by letting a patient touch the hem of his cloak. Once, at least, he spat on the ground and "made clay" and anointed a blind man's eyes with the clay. And he would not say, "You are going to get well," he would say "You are already cured," or imply it by his sharp command, "Walk!" He even used absent treatment; two such instances are recorded.

He claimed no monopoly of healing. When he heard that a practitioner outside his school was employing his methods with good result, he commended the outsider, and he took pains to tell his own pupils that they, too, could heal, and taught them how.

Nevertheless, he failed to recognize that his system of psychotherapy operated within the realm of natural law. In his own estimation, he was what our newspapers call a "miracle man," and he intended that onlookers should regard him as such.

Immediate was their response. Here and there a sour fellow accused him of healing by the aid of some devil, even naming the particular devil, yet the general impression was that he cured by the direct intervention of Almighty God, and could accomplish anything. The reports drawn up by his biographers not only credit him with performing cures wholly impossible to psychotherapy, but assert that he raised the dead. Far and wide went his fame, until his arrival in a town became the signal for the burghers to swarm out in excitement, bringing their sick. If Palestine

had possessed the modern system of disseminating news, he would have had the entire nation at his feet.

How lasting were his cures? How real? No methodical records were kept, and for what we can learn of his practice we are dependent upon accounts written at least thirty years afterward. Yet the work began early in his public career and lasted all through it and he was never afraid to go back into regions where he had practised. Unsuccessful healers are not so confident. But only slight importance attaches to such questions as these; the really important questions are: What was the effect of his practice upon his mission as Messiah? and, Why has modern Christianity persisted, until of late, in refusing to adopt and apply his system?

It is of course egregiously bad logic to argue that just because a man can heal the sick, he is qualified to teach spiritual truth; but bad logic predominated throughout Palestine during the First Century, A.D., quite as it has predominated elsewhere, before and since, and signs and wonders were not only attractive, they were convincing. Especially

when they expressed a beautiful and godly beneficence. This "miracle man," with his amazing cures, must somehow have come from God, people said, and there were onlookers here and there who, simply by reason of his success as a healer, thought him to be the Messiah. At the very least, his clinics persuaded them that his teachings about God as a power making for righteousness and about religion as the life of God in the soul of man, must be true.

The other question—namely, as to why modern Christianity has persisted until of late in refusing to adopt and apply his system—is more capable of direct answer than might at first appear. Theology stood in the way. Theology, having made him a god, found it difficult to accept its own dogma, and ransacked the whole realm of misinformation concerning him for arguments. Thus it hit on miracles, innocently disregarding the fact that only legend attributes miracles to him. Thus, although his cures were performed in strict accord with natural law, they were taken as proof that he himself was supernatural—from which it was but a short and easy step to assuming that

only a supernatural person could perform such cures.

The early Christians thought differently. So extensive was the practice of psychotherapy among them that legends grew up to the effect that they could raise the dead, and enthusiasts carried away handkerchiefs and bits of clothing a healer had touched, believing that even these would cure the sick, while others brought their sick on litters that the healer's shadow might fall upon them. As for the real clinics, they were practically the same as those of the Nazarene. Healers insisted on implicit faith. They applied suggestion through the senses by touching the patient or by grasping the hand. They cried out sharply, "Arise!" The only innovation they introduced was prayer.

These cures, though now known to have been purely natural, were looked upon as miraculous by the early Christians and by the completely unscientific world in which early Christianity was fast spreading. They helped it to spread still faster. As concrete propaganda—signs and wonders—they made a deep and lasting impression, and they had the further effect of bringing the be-

liever into direct relation, consciously, with his Creator. If ten thousand intimately exacting Jewish laws had ceased to affect him and if Christian freedom seemed to have led him out into a place too vaguely spacious, here was something that reached the very fibres of his physical self.

But it was principally for their utility as signs and wonders that the prophet of Nazareth valued his cures, and we may well question how far he would have got without them. When he first took up the rôle of Messiahship, he met with a cool enough response. His family were unsympathetic. The neighbours, there in Nazareth, seemed anything but impressed. Looking back to that period, later on, he remarked that a prophet was not without honour save in his own country and his own house. Not until he won distinction as a brilliantly successful psychotherapist were his claims to the Messiahship taken seriously.

He used psychotherapy as a means to an end, never as an end in itself. He was not one of those who think health the chief business of life and make a religion of it. What was health for a few years at most beside the issues of Messianic

judgment? If he delighted to heal men's bodies, what inspired him with a far more consuming zeal was his desire to prepare them for the day of his second coming, when he, sitting upon his throne, would decide their eternal destiny.

V

LEGEND would persuade us that the boy who grew up in Nazareth was a rather troublesome child of rather careless parents. Returning from a trip to Jerusalem, they travelled an entire day without noticing that the boy was not with them. He had slipped away by himself, heedless of their possible anxieties, and was found in the temple, where, though only twelve, he astonished the doctors of divinity with his erudition.

Beyond his legend and his own remarks that prophets are apt to make an unfortunate impression on their kinsfolk, we know nothing of his home life. Indeed, we know nothing at all significant about him—except that he learned carpentry, studied the Jewish classics and had a cousin who took to prophesying—until the day when he himself adopted that profession. In other words, the first thirty years of his career are virtually a blank; he died at thirty-three.

However, we find among his recorded utterances several that show his attitude toward family life. It was an attitude that still perplexes those who say his belief in his second coming is to be disregarded. Quite calmly he could announce that his teachings would divide families—father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother. As calmly he declared that no one could be a worthy pupil of his who was unwilling to renounce family affection altogether.

Every great religious genuis, in attempting to gain adherents, has seen that new doctrine grievously offends traditionalists and that beneath the same roof, not infrequently, convictions clash, to the ruin of domestic peace. But few harbingers of spiritual illumination have been represented by their biographers as being so indifferent to such consequences as was this young rabbi.

The family interested him not. Though he was no misogynist and could develop warm friendships with women, he never married. When told that his mother and his brothers were waiting to see him, he remarked that any obedient pupil had

as strong a hold upon his regard. When an enthusiastic woman called down blessings upon his mother, he said that calling down blessings upon his followers would be more reasonable. It is even recorded that, speaking with his mother face to face, he said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

His pupils shared his ideas as to the relative unimportance of family life, and passed them on. Early bishops and early deacons were selected from among married men, it is true, but the requirement was based upon prudential considerations only. The early church never idealized marriage. At best it merely condoned or defended it. Early dogmatists looked upon marriage as the lesser of two evils—a concession to human frailty; people unable to remain moral unless wedded were better wedded than single; people of firm character and controllable impulse were advised not to marry. Paul, a bachelor, urged other bachelors to stay so. At heart he was a Shaker.

In the case of a Messiah, of course, marriage would have been reprehensible; for Messiahship was not only dangerous but downright suicidal—

at all events the Messiahship assumed by the man of Nazareth was. As he understood it, the servant of God—that personification of the one generation on which was to fall the cleansing wrath of God, avenging the sins of the dead and assuring the future prosperity of the nation—was identical with the Messiah who would afterward leap from the sky in glory. No man, clearly foreseeing martyrdom and knowing that it is not far off, will marry.

But what excuse was this for his discrediting family affection altogether? Only by taking seriously those utterances of his about a second coming, as Messiahship judge and ruler, can we understand why he regarded family affection as of so slight importance. It was because the end of all things was at hand. In a few more years, all human institutions, the family included, would be swept away, along with the very stars of heaven.

That, in its turn, explains why there went up an outcry from early Christians against marriage—from Paul especially. The day of the second coming was near, argued Paul, and those who had wives would soon be no better off than those who had not. Then why marry? Why indeed?

But it is noteworthy that the man of Nazareth never sought to forbid marriage. Not one of his recorded utterances can be so construed as to make it appear that he did. Others, many others, show that he had no such intention. In his capacity as a Messianic law-giver, he pronounced marriage an institution divinely ordained, put the seal of his authority upon the old Jewish statute requiring children to honour their parents, and denounced the subterfuges by which Jewish legalism had violated its spirit. Also he dealt harshly with divorce and the remarriage of divorced people, and not only with adultery but with the mental licentiousness that is tantamount thereto.

Yet what interested him was not marriage and the family, it was the individuals involved. Marriage and the family would pass away. The individuals would not; they were immortal; and by the same token there was a consideration more important than any presented by marriage and the family. If family ties, merely temporal at best, restrained individuals from accepting the spiritualized and at once revivified and revivifying Judaism he strove to teach, then family ties must yield.

This demand upon his pupils for an undivided allegiance was necessary. In a world bitterly hostile, only extreme devotion could avail. He wanted complete zealots for his propagandists and complete zealots who could prove their devotion by a readiness to sacrifice every other interest. How well he understood how to secure them! A strange thing is this trait we call devotion. Ask of it little, and you get less than that little. Ask all, and it regrets only that it is unable to give more than all.

He set his pupils an example, though with evident difficulty when it came to making a show of discounting family ties in his own case. Those brusque, unfilial words of his to the Jewess who bore him have no ring of sincerity, and neither do his attempts to have it appear that he cared no more for his mother and his brothers than for his obedient pupils.

For centuries, theology has wondered what he meant; whereas, the truth is, he was forcing the note—doing on principle, and because he was cornered into it by his demand upon others, a thing he hated to do and might more wisely have avoided.

There is no irreverence in admitting this, any more than there is irreverence in admitting that a fallacious type of Jewish scholarship led him to identify the suffering "servant of God" with the Messiah and to identify himself with both. He could make mistakes. He was mistaken about his second coming, and he made a glaring mistake when he announced that it was to occur within the lifetime of certain among his hearers. To recognize his mistakes is to undermine theology; but then, is it not high time we set about undermining a theology that, in the name of reverence, disregards his clearly enunciated ideas about himself, and, by so doing, gives us another person entirely? That is not reverence. Nor is it good tactics. The other person thus presented for our acceptance fails to win it, and there is an excellent reason why he should fail; for, in order to win acceptance it is first necessary to exist.

VI

BECAUSE he was a carpenter, and because his followers came in course of time to accept something like the soviet idea of property, selling their lands, houses and goods, dividing as any man had need, and jeering at the rich, there are those who argue that the prophet who arose in Nazareth was a champion of Labour against Capital. Some even call him the first of the Socialists. He was neither.

And yet he held manifestly unpractical notions about property. It was foolish to lay up treasure. Moth and rust would consume it; thieves would break through and steal. If you argued that you were making provision for the future, he advised you to let the future provide for itself; birds and flowers were not anxious; why should you be? Have faith.

But laying up treasure was worse than foolish, it was harmful, for it led to ungodliness, as no one

could serve God and Mammon, and only with the utmost difficulty could a rich man enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. One enormously rich man was told to sell everything he owned and give away the money in indiscriminate charity. The now obvious unwisdom of indiscriminate giving went unnoticed. You were to give to anybody who asked.

In practice these curious economic doctrines would soon have annihilated Capital, it is true; but they were not propounded to capitalists alone, they were meant for universal application; and when doctrinaires attempt to portray the Nazarene as a champion of Labour against Capital there are serious obstacles, chief of which is his failure to show the slightest interest in the Labour question, though in his day it presented itself in a peculiarly harrowing form—the form, that is to say, of slavery. Not a single protest against slavery has he left us. No, nor a single comment to show that it interested him.

Albeit mildly, it interested his followers, and some of them, in letters to the faithful, advised gentleness on the slave-holders' part, while slaves were

to obey their masters with fear and trembling in singleness of heart. They sought to mitigate the horror of slavery, but never aimed at its abolition.

It was in this spirit precisely that the man who has been called the first of the Socialists approached the problem of poverty. Individual cases were to be relieved as rapidly as might be, but a chance remark of his that the poor we have always with us, has been interpreted through the ages as meaning that the poor we must have always with us. He had an opportunity to forestall such misinterpretation, but he let that opportunity go by. He never traced poverty to its causes nor devised projects looking to its final and complete eradication. He was no economist. No more than other Jews of his day was he a sociologist.

During his public career he stood aloof from the ordered realm of economics, himself. He owned nothing save the garments he wore. He never worked at his trade. At intervals, Paul went back to tent-making, but this wanderer in Galilee is not represented by his biographers as ever going back to carpentry. He depended on charity for food, shelter, and such doles of money as found their

way into the purse carried by his ill-chosen treasurer—one Judas.

To be sure, he looked upon himself as giving in return a service out of all proportion to the favours he accepted. When he commissioned seventy mendicant friars at once, sending them out unsupplied and unfinanced to live on the country as best they might, he told them that the labourer was worthy of his hire. So in his own case. And yet it made him anything but a suitable figure for Socialists to point out as the first of their kind. Nor do we find anywhere among his recorded teachings so much as a single precept bearing upon the virtue that must underlie all economic systems, Socialistic or otherwise—namely, industry. The old Jewish classics contain many such precepts. The anthology of Jewish proverbs teems with them. Instead of adding to that mass of exhortations belauding industry, this "first of all the Socialists" overlooks the subject altogether.

Despite his concentration upon the individual throughout his teachings and despite his disregard for all social problems, we now and then hear that he sought to introduce into our chaotic and mis-

guided world a new order of society. Nothing was further from his intention. The theory, however, is natural enough, for he talked constantly of a Kingdom of heaven—or of God—and used terms so loosely that an uncritical reading of his aphorisms leads easily to misinterpretation of them.

This Kingdom he talked about—what, really, did he mean by it? Various things. Different things at different times. Sometimes he meant the as yet unorganized but rapidly increasing company of his followers. What had at first looked like a mere grain of mustard seed was becoming a tree. And his followers were not to be too wary in their attitude toward applicants for admission to their ranks. Tares would appear among the wheat. So be it; later on, it would be necessary to weed them out, but that could wait. The net would bring up evil fish along with the good ones, yet the fish were not to be sorted until the end of the world. Thus the Kingdom of heaven—or of God—was "like unto" a grain of mustard seed, "like unto" a man in whose field an enemy sowed tares, and "like unto" a net.

At other times he told his pupils that the King-

dom was within them, meaning a power making for righteousness, a divine indwelling, the life of God in the soul of man. Once let it enter, and its influence would grow until it controlled the whole man. It was "like unto" yeast in a loaf; and it was so precious a thing that it was "like unto" a treasure hid in a field or "like unto" a pearl of great price. To obtain that field or that pearl, a man would sell all his possessions.

At still other times the Kingdom he spoke of was the Messianic Kingdom—his own triumphant reign in glory, a kingdom not of this world. One of his announcements of his second coming declared that he would be seen coming in his kingdom, and in a famous parable of his about the Ten Virgins, he refers directly to himself as the bridegroom whose coming his followers were to await. The parable begins with the words, "Then shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened unto," and ends with the words, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

Here, then, are the three different senses in which he used the term Kingdom of heaven—or of God—and not one of the three even suggests that

he sought to introduce into our chaotic and misguided world a new order of society, while the last of the three shows why such a project was entirely outside his range of thought. Moreover, it shows why he refused to become the champion of Labour against Capital, why he failed to attack slavery, why he never traced poverty to its causes or interested himself in projects looking to its final and complete eradication, why he never ranked industry among the major virtues, and why he could teach economic theories which in practice would wreck any imaginable or unimaginable economic system within an appallingly brief space.

Close at hand was the time when he would be seen coming in his kingdom, and the supreme duty of the individual was to watch, as no one knew the day nor the hour. Economic systems, industrial systems, governmental systems, social systems—how unimportant they appeared in the light of his second coming! All existing systems would then perish. During the short period that intervened, they interested him not. Only individuals did.

VII

A BEAUTIFUL story, so beautiful that we might almost call it a poem, relates that one night in Palestine the shepherds, while watching their flocks, suddenly beheld the sky filled with angels, who sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace!"

This story, not less than the epithet Prince of Peace, bestowed upon him after his death, has spread far the belief that the prophet of Nazareth was a pacifist.

Such he might well have been; for he not only forbade men to kill but commended them to love their enemies and pray for those who despitefully used them. Smitten on one cheek, they were to turn the other also. He told them never to resist evil; instead, they must requite evil with good. In the most famous of his public addresses he said that the peacemakers were blessed.

It is noticeable, however, that in all these in-

stances he was speaking of relations between man and man, just as he was when he said he had come, not to bring peace, but to bring a sword, and went on immediately to link that remark with a prediction that acceptance of his teachings would sometimes disrupt families. International relations were outside his province. So far as can be learned, he touched upon that subject only once, and then in rather a hopeless, fatalistic way, as will appear later.

There was no particular need of a pacifist among the Jews during the First Century, A.D. They were anything but warlike. All the fight had been taken out of them by Roman despotism. But their classics, destined to become a part of Christendom's moral text-book, and to endure as such, even to this very day, reeked with militarism. It would have been a service of incalculable value to humanity had the young rabbi denounced such teachings as fearlessly as he denounced the eye-for-eye-and-tooth-for-tooth doctrine in those same classics.

Consider. It was recorded in old Jewish scrolls that God himself proclaimed the duty of unpro-

voked conquest. Tribes of nomads were divinely commanded to invade a region peopled by town-dwellers far more civilized than themselves. No excuse is named for this outrage save the fact that the land was desirable land, productive of unusually large grapes and an abundance of milk and honey, and that the inhabitants worshipped gods whom the Jews themselves could not always be restrained from worshipping.

Jewish classics describe with glee the atrocities that enlivened this campaign for a place in the sun, and invariably such atrocities are represented as having been committed in obedience to divine command. It was Jehovah who delivered up the conquered and who instigated wholesale massacres. The invaders were forbidden to make terms. They were forbidden to show mercy.

These orders were literally carried out wherever possible. We read, for instance, that a Jewish marauder stormed Makkedah and smote it with the edge of the sword and the king thereof, whereupon he massacred the inhabitants—utterly destroyed them and left none remaining. That was typical, except that, in order to complete the job

in the usual way, he should have burned Makkedah "with fire."

It is true that this incursion of barbarism into a civilized and peaceful land resulted in a rather incomplete conquest. The rightful owners of the country were not exterminated, quite, nor altogether dispossessed. We hear from the survivors later on, when their gods are always fascinating a minority of the Jews and sometimes a majority. But the point is irrelevant. What counts is the predominance of a peculiarly savage militarism in the Jewish classics, where the Lord God of Hosts is the tribal battle god—a divinity who, under the name of Gott, was to reappear in modern Prussia.

The young rabbi who became a strolling prophet had an opportunity to say, bluntly, "This barbaric war god in your old Jewish scrolls never existed. He was a fiction, out and out, and the unprovoked conquest he is said to have directed was a carnival of applied depravity. The Father in Heaven I worship is another God entirely from this monster your ancestors worshipped."

Just one sentence in that vein, had it come

down to us from the man of Nazareth, would have influenced profoundly the mind of Christendom. It was insufficient merely to preach peace as between man and man, forbidding individual murder, commanding men to love their personal enemies and requite a personal affront with its personal opposite. Once a war has broken out, the very things that rank as private crimes during a reign of peace instantly assume the rank of public virtues, while many a peace-time virtue as instantly becomes a crime—non-resistance, for example, may bring death and destruction to one's dependents and will at the very least wipe out the national heritage that is their birthright.

Among the ancient prophets, with whose writings the Nazarene was familiar, there were a few who boldly denounced war. He might well have quoted them—in particular, the magnificent poet-statesman and philosopher who looked forward to the time when peoples would beat their swords into plowshares, when the art of war would cease to be learned, and when nation would no longer rise up against nation. That was specific. It applied. He was writing, not of personal affairs,

but of international affairs. He was the supreme and the first—Prince of Peace.

Fifty nations, the bulk of them Christians, are now banded together in a great league to prevent war. Yet the Christian members of that league are unable to cite one specifically anti-militaristic precept that bears the stamp of the Nazarene's authority, while the one specific mention of war he permitted himself was a mention of future war. During the period just before his second coming, nation would rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom; there would be wars and rumours or wars. He registered no protest. He never suggested that war was preventable. He said of these predicted wars that such things must needs come to pass.

And even in his attitude toward violence between man and man, he could be strangely inconsistent. He could command a follower to put up his sword, it is true, but a biographer of his was convinced that on one occasion, when master and pupils were in great danger, he ordered swords purchased.

Now it would be folly to argue, merely because

on a single occasion he seemed to endorse self defense, and because he never specifically condemned public war, and because he looked upon an approaching war as inevitable, that he would have condoned war, had his opinion been sought. The whole spirit of the man forbids any such suspicion, and the real reason for his apparent indifference to the subject is to be sought in his belief that he was the Messiah. As such, he already had a remedy for war—namely, himself. He was coming again to judge the world and reign. There would then be a new world—the Kingdom of heaven—and no more war.

During the years of his prophetic mission, he had no hope of reforming this world. It was a bad world, doomed to stay bad. As long as it lasted, nation would rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom; there would be wars and rumours of wars—these things must needs come to pass. But while he despaired of reforming human institutions, he had unlimited faith in the possibility of reforming human beings. That, during the three years he tramped the highways of Palestine before going up to Jerusalem in quest of martyrdom, was

his aim. He had no other. In the accomplishment of that one all-absorbing purpose, not the grimmest self-sacrifice was too extreme, nor the utmost hardship too grievous, if only he could establish within the hearts of human beings the Kingdom of heaven, enlarging daily the Godlike kingdom of his followers, and prepare them for acceptance in the Kingdom of heaven that was to be when this present world should pass away.

VIII

THE most romantic, perhaps, of all the stories told to wondering children relates how a party of Orientals followed a moving star until it stopped over the house where an infant prince, heir to the Jewish throne, lay wrapped in swaddling bands. When they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother they fell down and worshipped him and opening their treasure they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

But the story includes no mention of special homage to the madonna, nor would Jewish customs have allowed it. The madonna was unclean. She had still to undergo a long process of purification, during which she must not enter the sanctuary or touch any hallowed thing. Had her child been a girl, the process of purification would have taken much longer.

This churching of women was required by the

Jewish code. Mary, though now called in certain liturgies the holy mother of God, paid the full penalty, enduring all the humiliation involved. Seven days she was unclean. Thirty-three days more she was debarred from attending divine service and no sacred object could she touch.

Her boy, when he grew up, studied the code, and there he found this affront to womanhood explicitly commanded in legal terms. For bearing a son, seven days of uncleanness, thirty-three days of purification. For bearing a daughter, fourteen days of uncleanness, sixty-six days of purification.

In their endeavour to show how exalted was the position of woman among the Jews, theologians remind us that Miriam led a corybantic dance and was accounted a prophetess; that another prophetess, Deborah, held court under a palm tree in the hills and judged all Israel; that Huldah prophesied in Jerusalem; and that Athaliah was a queen. But the Jewish chronicler tells us that the churching of mothers was required even then, and the double penalty for having borne a daughter reveals a disdain for womanhood that still expresses itself in the orthodox Jewish prayer-book, where the

men are bidden to recite, "Oh, Lord God, the Eternal, King of the Universe, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me a woman!"

In the churching of women, the Nazarene saw womanhood dishonoured by a custom at once ignoble and absurd. He never denounced that custom. He saw women held in subjection throughout their lives. He saw them hemmed in by a Jewish version of the four K's—*Kinder, Küche, Kleider, Kirche.* He never intimated that keeping half the race thus subjected was inexpedient as well as unjust, nor can we discover among his recorded aphorisms a single utterance calculated to forestall the anti-feminism that was to prevail among his followers later on.

Paul, for example, was left free to forbid women to teach. He could forbid them to speak in church. He could order them to be in subjection to their husbands. He could declare that the man was the head of the woman, and that the woman was made for the man. He even dictated fashions. Women must not braid their hair, they must not wear jewellery, they must not wear expensive dresses. When praying, they must wear veils.

He was no misogynist. In his letters he sends his love to several women, whose names we know. But he opposed the emancipation of women, and, when once theology took to announcing that he wrote by supernatural inspiration, the general principles of his anti-feminism gripped the church. Largely because of a few paragraphs by a First Century bachelor, women have waited for emancipation until well within our own day.

To be sure, it was no work of Paul's when the bishops of the early church doubted that women had souls, nor was Paul responsible when Scottish theologians denounced the use of chloroform in obstetrics as an unauthorized mitigation of the divine curse upon woman; yet when an American newspaper accused Elizabeth Cady Stanton of "infidel fanaticism" because she argued for women's rights before the New York Legislature, we had a clear case. If the pen was the editor's, the ink was Paul's.

He, too, would have berated Mrs. Stanton. He obtained no instructions sanctioning any such behaviour as hers. By the same token, he would have berated all the women who through public

agitation have won a place for their sex in education, in business, in the professions, and in politics. And if he were with us to-day it is more than likely that he would attack Prohibition. On that point, also, he was without instructions, and personally he was a "wet." In a letter afterwards pronounced to have been written by supernatural inspiration, he urged a clergyman to stop drinking water.

It has been thought strange that the Nazarene should have left us no observations on the liquor problem. In the old Jewish classics he encountered the highly bibulous ideas set forth by Jewish Omar Khayyams. Several such there had been. One sang of wine that cheereth God and man. Another told the poor to drown their sorrows in drink. A third asked if a man had anything better than to eat, drink, and be merry. Frequent passages in those old Jewish classics roused the Nazarene to indignation. These belauding alcohol he let pass without comment.

Moreover, he tramped constantly through the wine districts of Palestine and saw with his own eyes how eagerly the Jews obeyed their Omar

Khayyams. There were Jews who rose up early to follow strong drink and tarried late into the night until wine inflamed them. We read of a particularly villainous claret that gave its colour in the cup. We read also of spiced wines. There was even a mixed drink, the Jewish cocktail. And we read of the consequences of excess—redness of eyes, poverty, fights, and the rest—for the Jewish temperance advocates were as outspoken as the Jewish Omar Khayyams. Indeed, we learn of total abstainers, the Nazarites. The young rabbi whose mind we are fathoming knew them well, but never joined them, for his principles and his practice forbade. He drank wine with his pupils. He told them to drink to his memory at the Passover feast. He said there would be wine in the Kingdom of God—meaning in this instance the Messianic Kingdom that was to come—and that he, himself, would drink it there. His enemies called him a wine-bibber.

Nor was it a "dry" church that his followers established. Though they condemned drunkenness and insisted that deacons must not be given to much wine, their most eminent theologian could

still warn the minister against the evil effects of water and beg him to break the habit.

Here, just as in the case of the status assigned to woman, the Nazarene left an enormous social problem unsolved, and if the total abstainers are on the right side of the question, then clearly he threw the weight of his example on the wrong side. It has been a great embarrassment to theology.

For, while his prediction of his second coming was not fulfilled, his prediction that false teachers would arise came true. His own pupils joined them. Despite his emphatic statement to the contrary, they made him a god. And one attribute of deity is omniscience; a god can see ahead through the centuries. Had the young rabbi been a god, he would have reckoned with the consequences of leaving women in subjection—especially the moral consequences. His biographers imply that he was not unfamiliar with underworld conditions. The subjection of women—economic, social, and political—breeds harlots. A god would have known it, just as a god would have known that alcohol, allowed to have its way, was destined to work monstrous havoc—moral havoc in particular

—century after century. Would the theologians have us believe that the young rabbi did know, and that, in consequence, he was measurably responsible for what came of his failure to give womankind a new status and to deal effectively with the liquor traffic?

It would seem more reverent to take the young rabbi at his word. He said, many a time, and in plain language, that he was not seeing ahead through centuries of this world's career. He said that he expected this world soon to perish. He said he thought the day was so near at hand that men must watch for it with unceasing vigilance. He said that he himself was the Messiah who would come. He never said that he was a god, and even when he predicted that false teachers would arise, it never entered his thought that, in direct violation of his claims, they would make him a god.

This effort on the part of early heretics, among whom certain of his pupils figured conspicuously, has added nothing to his glory. As a god, he baffles understanding and affronts the conscience. As a man, with a man's mind and in particular a Jew-

ish mind, he is comprehensible. As a man, he could make mistakes. He was mistaken about his second coming. He was mistaken about the future of this world. If, also, he made mistakes in omitting from his curriculum in personal ethics a course leading to a new respect for womanhood and another leading to a more cautious attitude toward alcohol, we are at liberty to note such mistakes. They were natural. As a Jew, he shared the contemporary Jewish estimate of womanhood. As a Jew, in a wine-growing country, he saw no more harm in temperate drinking than other Jews did.

Confessedly, we are employing the realistic method in our study of him. We seek the man himself. And we are dealing with a man so immeasurably great that nothing but a lack of reverence for his greatness can prompt a desire to hide his limitations. Only by recognizing them is it possible to admire rightly the superb religious genius who, despite limitations and errors, was the first to reveal God as a power making for righteousness and religion as the life of God in the soul of man. Limitations? Errors? Yes, and he rose above them all.

IX

By a singular paradox, the mind that more than any other has influenced the world's thought was a provincial mind, and only by examining its provincialism can we appreciate its magnificent universality.

Whereas Paul, though brought up a Pharisee, was saturated with Roman ideas, and whereas John was intellectually a Greek, the rabbi who went out from a small town in Galilee had nothing eclectic about him; Roman ideas concerned him not, Greek ideas he ignored. So provincial was he, indeed, that he accepted with unquestioning faith the very mythology of his race. He believed in Satan. He believed in the angels. He believed in Jonah. He believed in Elijah reincarnated as John the Baptist.

Strange misconceptions prevail as to the Jewish accounts of Satan. Theologians have told us that Satan was the snake who tempted Eve. The ac-

count itself says nothing of the kind; it says a snake was the snake. Moreover, theologians have told us that Satan was the Lucifer who fell from heaven. The account itself says the king of Babylon was that Lucifer. Tauntingly, jeeringly, the old writer bids his majesty recall that he has styled himself Lucifer, the Light Bearer. Down he will come, and the thing is as good as accomplished already. Had John Milton understood this, his daughters would have been spared the trouble of taking a great deal of unnecessary dictation.

But the authentic Jewish Satan is strange enough. We first come upon him in a Jewish imitation of a Greek tragedy, where he is seen in heaven beside the throne of God, obtaining divine authorization for a moral experiment on Job. It ends happily, but not before Job has been subjected to unmerited afflictions.

Nevertheless, the man of Nazareth accepted Satan as a living reality. He said Satan came to him and sought to get away Peter. He said Satan had bound a patient of his for eighteen years.

With the same unquestioning faith he accepted the angels, though the Jewish classics in which he read of them described creatures very different from the angels of Fra Angelico and Della Robbia. Some had wings, to be sure, but those Jacob saw in his dream required a ladder, and in general, the angels were remarkably like men. Two angels visited Lot in Sodom. He rose up and went to meet them at the gate. There he bowed himself with his face to the ground, and, addressing them as "my lords," invited them in. He washed their feet. He gave them rooms. He provided a meal, which they ate.

Early Christian angels resembled humans as closely. In a letter written by a follower of the Nazarene it was asserted that any one welcoming strangers into his home might find himself entertaining angels. When Peter escaped from jail and knocked at the door of a house, people who could not believe it was Peter said it must be his angel.

But in the angel Balaam met we have another species, quite. Balaam, a Mesopotamian trance-medium, was riding his donkey along the highway in broad daylight when that occurred. The don-

key saw the angel and shied, but Balaam saw nothing. He smote the donkey. The donkey, however, kept seeing the angel and kept on shying. When Balaam smote her again, the Lord opened her mouth and she spoke, protesting. Finally, the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and then the angel became visible to him also.

In point of morals, the angels differed widely. There were good angels and bad angels. One, called the Angel of the Lord, was a mighty headsman. On a memorable occasion he went forth and slew in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand, so that early in the morning they were all dead corpses.

When we first encounter them in the Jewish legend, the angels are called the sons of God. They saw the daughters of earth that they were fair. They took them wives of all that they chose, and their children became mighty men of old, men of renown. This propensity on the angels' part was recognized by Paul, who commanded wives to wear a mark of authority because of the angels.

Despite all this, the man of Nazareth believed implicitly in the angels. He spoke of guardian

angels, with faces turned ever toward the throne of God. When beset by his enemies he said that God could send more than twelve legions of angels to defend him.

Not less firmly he believed in Jonah, and, whereas the old account mentions only a great fish, he says plainly that the great fish was a whale. He even makes Jonah's adventure an argument to support his prophecy of his own resurrection. When an evil and perverse generation demands a sign, no sign shall be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah, for, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so would the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

In approaching the young rabbi's belief that his cousin, John the Baptist, was a reincarnation of Elijah, we seem to have crossed over into something strangely like Hinduism, yet the idea was purely Jewish. Universal reincarnation held no place in the old Jewish creed, for the old Jewish creed maintained that the soul could not survive death. But, according to legend, Elijah had not died. Body, clothes, and all, he had ascended into

heaven. There came a chariot of fire with horses of fire and Elijah went up by a whirlwind.

A previous case, that of Enoch, had been equivocal: God took him; but how, and whither, and into what condition, the account failed to say. No one gave much thought to Enoch. Elijah's case, however, was clear. It stirred the imagination, piqued curiosity. How was Elijah faring, up yonder? What was he about? What spectacles of celestial glory had he witnessed? What tales could he tell of angels and archangels and, perhaps, Satan? Such questions led, not unnaturally, to a still more interesting one. If Elijah could ascend into heaven, might he not as easily return to earth?

In the course of time there arose a prophet who declared that just this would happen. The prediction became so widely known that when the Nazarene hung upon the cross and, in his last agony, cried out in words from a Jewish poem, the unlettered bystanders, knowing the vernacular, but not the language of the classics, were misled by a resemblance of sounds and, their minds harking back to the prophecy, thought that he was calling

for Elijah. A few jeered. The rest waited to see if actually Elijah would not descend from heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by flaming steeds.

Still, there would have been a difference between returning as he went and returning as an infant John the Baptist to begin life anew. That would have meant reincarnation in the Hindu sense. To a Jew of the prophet's day it would have involved heresy. Yet some very pronounced changes had occurred in Jewish thought since then. The Jews now commonly believed that the soul survived death, and there were those among them who believed that in rare instances souls might be reincarnated. Some announced that the young rabbi from Nazareth was a reincarnation of Isaiah. Others said he was Elijah.

So he affronted no convention of contemporary thought when he announced that already Elijah had returned to earth in the person of John the Baptist. It seemed to him a thing by no means difficult to credit. If he himself was the Messiah, why should not his cousin have had this lesser glory bestowed upon him? Then, too, the thing gained a certain picturesque, though superficial, plausi-

bility from circumstances. For centuries there had been no prophets. Now, beside Jordan, stood a figure garbed like the uncouth Jewish dervishes of old and reviving their lapsed prestige.

What convinced the Nazarene, however, was not that. What convinced him was the advent of John at precisely the right time. For the ancient dervish who predicted Elijah's return had said it would occur shortly before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Those were his words. Yonder, beside Jordan, was what the young rabbi took to be their fulfilment.

That assumed fulfilment reinforced the young rabbi's contention that ere long his own second coming would usher in the Messianic Kingdom over which he was to reign. Thus the idea of Elijah's reincarnation fitted in perfectly with the idea that was always uppermost in the young rabbi's mind.

It is immaterial that, when the story of his being Elijah reached John, he denied it; had he endorsed the story we should not be satisfied. We should ask how he knew. And yet this belief of the Nazarene's that his cousin was Elijah, like his be-

lief in Satan and the angels and in Jonah, takes on a great importance when we come to appraise him.

They show how Jewish he was, how provincial, how handicapped. That the same rabbi should, nevertheless, have fathomed the depths of spiritual truth, giving us our loftiest conception of God and our profoundest understanding of man, and should thus have achieved a sublime universality, with the right everywhere to dominate the soul—this is the most impressive revelation of his genius.

Legend has sought to glorify him by saying he could walk on the sea, fast forty days, still the tempest, turn water into wine, and multiply loaves and fishes; whereas the real miracle was himself.

X

BELIEVING in Satan, in the angels, in Jonah, and in the reincarnation of Elijah as John the Baptist, the Nazarene showed that he saw in the mere wonder of a thing no obstacle to its acceptance, provided it were vouched for in the sacred literature of his race. There he read that a virgin would conceive and bear a child, and theologians have told us that the prophecy was fulfilled in his own miraculous birth.

Two of his four biographers say he was miraculously born. One of them thinks so because Mary's betrothed had a dream to that effect, the other because of the prophecy, though the truth would have rested upon the testimony of one woman, Mary herself. Though she is said to have improvised the superb hymn of thanksgiving and praise preserved for our admiration, it nowhere asserts that her child was to be supernaturally born. Nor have we any testimony from her as to

that. Instead, the biographers quote Gabriel, an angel.

According to this report, Gabriel also declared that the child would inherit the throne of an ancestor on the male line, and named the ancestor. Similarly, the very first sentence of the New Testament mentions the child's ancestors on the father's side, and the genealogical table that immediately follows traces his lineage in the male line. With these statements as a foundation, the writer goes on to declare that the Nazarene had no earthly father, but was born of a virgin.

This bald inconsistency would astonish us were we not acquainted with an older work, where two accounts of the creation are placed side by side, though differing in important details, and where two different accounts of the flood are as fearlessly juxtaposed. Consistency was not the ideal of Jewish chroniclers; a profound reverence for old manuscripts was. If a chronicler found two accounts disagreeing, he kept both, and copied both into his own. That was the way, and we may well remind ourselves that something remarkably like it was the way of a church council long after-

ward. There the question arose as to whether God had created the universe instantaneously or in six days. Quite solemnly theologians decreed that all good Christians must believe both.

So, when an early Jewish Christian collected documents for use in compiling a biography of the Nazarene, it was natural that he should use them all, discarding neither the legend of the virgin birth nor the genealogy in the male line. To him, both were sacred; he had that sort of mind.

Our own minds are not so made. We resent inconsistency. In much the same spirit we resent incongruity. Were the legends of the virgin birth less exquisitely phrased, many might see in them a recrudescence of the stories in which angels mate with mortals or note a resemblance to the miraculous births so common in mythology. Sheer literary art prevent. There are even those who say the legend enhances the glory of God.

The doubters (numerous theologians now doubt the virgin birth) are moved less by æsthetic than by intellectual repugnance. The story affronts reason, and in these modern days there is growing up a belief—heretical as yet, but, nevertheless, to

be reckoned with—that truth is reasonable. Moreover, many are unwilling to credit the legend because it makes the rabbi of Nazareth a supernatural being, automatically moral, in which case what value to mere humans has his example?

All this, however, is beside the point. We are not seeking to determine, as by court procedure, whether or not the young rabbi was miraculously born. The only person who could have told us died without leaving any recorded testimony, and, had she claimed that the birth was miraculous, it would have remained to establish her veracity. What we are attempting to learn is whether or not the young rabbi himself believed that he had no human father.

Not one of his four biographers asserts that he so believed. He was never quoted as so saying. On the only occasion mentioned when people asked who his father was, he let them go on believing that his father was Joseph, the Nazarene carpenter.

Two of his biographers omit the legend of the birth. Of these, one is supposed to have been the favourite pupil to whom he confided his most i 1-

timate convictions regarding his relation with God. Whole monologues are recorded, yet not once does he speak of a miraculous birth.

After his death, when his followers deified him, an elaborate theology developed, with his divinity as its central idea. We have records of it—not only sermons, more or less accurately reported, but theological treatises dedicated to churches or to individuals. Many different writers contributed to this library of argumentative literature. Some addressed Greeks, some Romans, some Jews. In each instance the writer sought to fit his theology to the convictions already held by his readers. Hence the analogies with Greek philosophy, with Roman justice, and with the Jewish sacrificial system. Thus, with surprising resourcefulness and versatility, these impromptu metaphysicians ransacked the entire realm of current thought for arguments to prove that the rabbi who had sought martyrdom and found it, was a god. But the most convincing argument—namely, that he was supernaturally born—they never used. There can be only one reason. They had never heard of it. Nor had he, we may conclude.

Diligently he read the ancient scroll in which it was predicted that a virgin would conceive and bear a child. He searched all the Jewish classics. He had a strong personal motive for so doing. He wanted more and more evidence that he was the Messiah destined to come again. Any phrase that could be so interpreted had an enormous interest for him. But when he came to this singular passage, which one of his biographers uses as a proof of his miraculous birth, he saw nothing to concern him. It was irrelevant—completely so.

The babe whose birth it foretold was to be called Immanuel—a name the young rabbi never bore. Ere the babe was old enough to know right from wrong, two kingdoms, Syria and Samaria, were to fall. The Nazarene could not learn that during his infancy any such events had occurred.

It is not astonishing that a First-Century biographer, bent on deifying his hero, should have seen the man of Nazareth foreshadowed in this prophecy. At a far later period, metaphysicians as ill-qualified wrote commentaries on a collection of grossly erotic poems still preserved in the Bible and said the lovers depicted were Christ and his

church. But we are not living in the days when Solomon's Song could figure as devotional literature, and still less are we living in the First Century. We are free to liberate realities from the growth of metaphysics and legend that has hidden them.

It is not difficult. It involves no perils. It brings no loss. On the contrary, it brings inestimable gain. We see the man himself, to whose glory neither legend nor metaphysics can add. Rather, they detract from it, dishonouring the god they have created.

For thus they make him incredible save to a minority in each generation. And that minority has its seasons of doubt. Preachers, even, have theirs. That is why modern preaching has lost its power. First-Century errors were an aid to faith in the First Century; the more incredible a thing was the more easily it convinced. The same thing is now an obstacle to faith, and resembles a foreign body in the mind. Believers sense it there, and reproach themselves for so doing. They believe, not because they are unable to disbelieve, but because they consciously, and with an effort, over-

come difficulties presented by ascertained knowledge. This may be piety, but it is not religion. Religion has no quarrel with ascertained knowledge. To say that it has is to make God a liar—which many pietists are now attempting to do, in a strange and profoundly irreligious confidence that so they serve him to good purpose.

XI

THE god created by First-Century metaphysicians, whose writings theology afterward pronounced infallible, had laid the foundations of the earth, they said. He was before all things. In him all things consisted. The world was made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. Even God the Father was said to have addressed him as God.

This complete deification, though amazing in its audacity and its want of reverence alike for God the Father and for the teachings given in unmistakable terms by the Nazarene, was an easy matter in the First Century, A. D. Whole races then believed a man could be a god—Greeks, Romans, Egyptians.

Even while living, Alexander the Great had proclaimed himself a god. Julius Cæsar had done the same. His image had appeared among those of the gods in the *pompa* of the Arena. The in-

scription on the plinth of his statue in a Roman temple had declared him an unconquerable god. A special priesthood had seen to it that he was properly worshipped. In Egypt, the pharaohs had long been looked upon as gods. A signet ring once belonging to an Egyptian monarch and now to be seen in New York at the Metropolitan Museum, bears his majesty's ritualistic title, "Ra, Lord of All Things; Beloved of Amen Ra; Lord of Eternity."

It is true that the Jewish mind affected a horror of all foreign ideas, and especially of foreign religious ideas. But it took the united efforts of rebuking prophets and stern monarchs a very long time to make them entirely stop worshipping Phœnician or Canaanitish gods—Baal, Ashtoreth, and their kind—nor could anything restrain them from copying Babylonian myths into their own chronicles; so, when Greeks and Romans came to Palestine, the tales they told of the mighty gods, Alexander and Cæsar, were not without effect. An intense nationalism, dominant among Jews ever since the great deportation, prevented their taking either the Greek or the Roman god-emperor

too seriously, but the mere tales prepared in certain Jewish minds a lodging place for the idea that in reality the Nazarene had been a god.

Moreover, their own Jehovah was so human—that is to say, so anthropomorphic—as to have prepared some such lodging place already. In their sacred scrolls they read of his outstretched arm, his watchful eye, his nostrils that loved the smell of burning meat. Even the great prophets, those whose rhapsodies have at times an incomparable poetic grandeur, disclose at other times their conception of God as a mere oriental monarch seated on a throne and acclaiming the virtues of unprovoked warfare. Base, indeed, were many accounts of God in Jewish legend. Theologians have told us that Jacob wrestled with an angel, but the account says he wrestled with a man, whom he afterward recognized as God. Minds saturated with these and similar ideas could well have reasoned that, if God was a man, a man might be a god.

This is far from saying that any Jew of the First Century, A. D., was ever conscious of so reasoning. Yet, once the idea presented itself, it found immediate acceptance, particularly among

the Nazarene's former pupils. Those who had known him most intimately were the first to believe it. They felt that here was the only explanation of the man they remembered.

But acceptance is one thing, and intellectual consistency another. The longer the First-Century metaphysicians considered, the more they wavered. They said he was God, then that he was the image of God, then that in him dwelt the fullness of the godhead bodily, then that he was God completely, and so it went. The mass of theological literature they have left us presents a score of different theories, each interesting to theologians as affording opportunity for endless speculation and debate, and each interesting to us all as showing the profound impression the man had made on his followers. That alone is sufficient to prove the consummate beauty of his character, the sublime and unexampled elevation of his soul.

Yet he never claimed to be a god. He never claimed divine attributes. Once he denied that he was morally perfect, and said that only God was. He never claimed omnipotence; the same metaphysician who says the world was made by

the man of Nazareth quotes him as insisting that, of himself, he could do nothing. True, he claimed the right to forgive sins, but he told his pupils that they, too, could forgive sins.

Human greatness he acknowledged. With a frankness the manners of the time permitted, he said that he was greater than Jonah, and greater, even, than Solomon. Son of man, the title he bestowed upon himself, he took from an old prophet, whom God, according to the prophet, always addressed by that title. This use of it by a First-Century rabbi amounted to a kind of self-ordination.

Yet how modest he was! He used another title, Son of God, never guessing that his followers would infer that he himself was a god and that they would do it despite his repeated declaration that they, too, were sons of God. How little he realized the beauty and overwhelming impressiveness of his own personality, which, in the very nature of things, considering the devotion it begot, was sure to result in calamitous, albeit affectionate, misinterpretation.

As little did he realize that, largely because he called himself the son of God, Christianity would

place the worship of the Nazarene before the imitation of him and actually think first of the Nazarene and only secondarily of God. In his certainty that he was the Messiah, destined to come again, he foresaw no Christianity, no worship of himself, no metaphysical interpretation of him. He foresaw no centuries. Within a few brief years, both sun and moon would be darkened and the entire earthly order of things swept away for ever.

This central idea of his that he was the Messiah gives us our key to the mystery of what he believed regarding his own nature. The Messiah, he thought, must endure martyrdom. But when we examine the prophecy we learn that the martyr, called the servant of God, personified the single generation of Jews upon whom was to fall the cleansing wrath of God, to the advantage of posterity as well as in expiation of sins committed by past generations. The servant of God was not a god. There is nowhere the faintest hint that he was a god. Nor was the Messianic king to be a god. He was to be a prince of the house of David.

So we find that the long and fruitless theological

endeavour to explain how the Nazarene could be at the same time God and man was quite uncalled for. He made no such endeavour himself. He saw no occasion to. He was a man, therefore a son of God. He was the unique but entirely human Messiah; in his uniqueness as Messiah, he was *the* son of God, but for no other reason. He spoke of God as "my Father" and as "your Father." He called his followers his brethren.

The key that unlocks the mystery of what he believed regarding himself unlocks also a number of otherwise insoluble mysteries as to what his followers believed regarding him. Loyal interpreters though they sought to be, they reflect him, not in a glass darkly, but in a glass distorted by a loving, though regrettable, misapprehension of his nature. They mistake him for God. Things they should of right attribute to God they attribute to him—ineffably beautiful and precious and soul-regenerating things, which become, not less wonderful, but more, when we understand that all are the gifts of the one spirit who is over all, through all, under all, and in whom we live, move, and have our being.

This, in a word, was the very simple and entirely understandable faith of the man himself. Once we grasp it, it clings to us so that by no process of intellection and in no grimmest mood of spiritual lethargy or rebelliousness can we shake it off. It stays. And no new and surprising advent of ascertained knowledge will dim its radiance. Instead, it illumines knowledge.

XII

THEOLOGY, as we know it to-day, appears the product of quiet reflection, disturbed now and then by controversy, but in the main an affair of university quadrangles or ministerial libraries. It has not always been so. At times, its most fateful decisions, destined powerfully to affect the thought of generations, our own included, have been arrived at amid scenes ill befitting the occasion and in circumstances we recall with anything but pride.

One such occasion, at a town in Asia Minor, was especially fateful, especially marred by unseemly incidents, especially inglorious in its circumstances. Need had been felt of a unifying force to hold together the Roman Empire. Christianity, it was thought, might serve the purpose; but Christians, at the time, were at odds among themselves regarding the inner nature of God. Before Christianity could serve as the desired cohesive factor,

agreement must be reached. It must be reached by vote.

To determine the inner nature of God by vote, the Emperor Constantine, then a pagan, assembled at Nicæa a congress of metaphysical theorists from all the churches in the year 325 A. D. From his golden throne in the midst of them, he watched, rather than followed, their debates, for they wrangled in Greek, a language with which he was but little acquainted. However, there came moments when eyes were as good as ears—for example, when the aged Arius stood up to speak and Nicholas of Myra struck him in the face.

After many tempestuous sessions, of which the less said, the better, the inner nature of God was at last determined. God, according to a majority of the ballots, was a Trinity—three persons, distinct but not separate—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God.

This unimaginable idea, arithmetically self-destructive and philosophically abnormal, has been the test of orthodoxy for sixteen hundred years. No one has ever understood it. No one can. Yet to doubt it is accounted a sin. A dam-

natory clause accompanying the Athanasian Creed tells doubters they will perish eternally.

Frequently one meets people who say they find the idea of the Trinity entirely comprehensible, but it soon develops that they have in mind another idea and not this. Belief in one God manifesting himself in three different ways is not Trinitarianism, it is Sabellianism, a notorious heresy. Most church-members to-day—and, indeed, most clergymen—are Sabellians. According to the Athanasian Creed, they will therefore perish eternally.

The pure dogma which teaches that three persons, distinct but not separate, are one, was formulated by a type of mind that has entirely vanished from the earth. So it is not remarkable that theology, in its efforts to sustain the dogma, should now and then have employed some very curious devices. Theologians there have been who argued that, inasmuch as trinities are of common occurrence in heathen religions, the theorists at Nicæa made no mistake. Again, we have been told that the Hebrew word for deity is plural, which it is, and that this plurality of idiom originated in a design to intimate a plurality in the nature of God. In

reality it intimates that the race who originated the idiom worshipped a plurality of gods at the time and for a considerable time thereafter. It was from ingrained habit that they called their own Jehovah, not God, but Gods. Still again, theologians have employed analogy. As, in the material sun, the light and the heat proceed from the orb, yet the three are of the same duration, so in the deity the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father, yet they are all of the same duration; the sun itself is three in one; there is the round orb, the light, and the heat; each of these we call the sun!

The futility of such logic might amuse us were not the theologians so earnestly endeavouring to make reasonable a dogma they have felt it their duty to accept. Better advised are those who call the dogma a mystery which must necessarily remain so, though it is with regret that we find them adding that its incomprehensibility proves nothing but that we are finite beings and not God.

In reality it proves that a very troublesome dogma was formulated at Nicæa by finite beings. Equally finite beings helped Athanasius to decide

that all except Trinitarians would without doubt perish eternally.

But, if the dogma was actually so important, it would seem strange that Christendom had to wait for it until well into the Fourth Century. No Trinity figures in the writings left us by the Nazarene's contemporaries. As his idea of God and his idea of his own Messiahship prevented, no Trinity figures in the teachings of the man himself. It is true that a proof-text proclaiming a Trinity got into the King James version of the New Testament, but it is also true that the revised version omits it, because when the revisers looked for it in the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament it could not be found in any one of them. It was clearly a forgery inserted later on by a zealous, but unprincipled, Trinitarian.

So we are forced to conclude that, unless Athanasius was misled, all the New Testament writers have without doubt perished eternally and that the Nazarene has. In his attitude toward this dogma he was a Unitarian.

Not content with formulating a Trinity, the Fourth-Century theorists undertook to determine

what was going on inside the Trinity. Did the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father alone, or did the Holy Ghost proceed from both Father and Son? A single Latin word, *filioque,* meaning "and the son" was enough to split Christendom in two; the Greek Church went one way, the Roman Church the other, and to this hour a single Latin word keeps them apart. Inasmuch as no Trinity existed, so large a quarrel over what was going on inside it would seem to have been needless.

As needless, too, is the handicap afflicting Christian missions. Stripped of accretions at once incomprehensible and unimaginable, the Nazarene's faith might long ere this have swept round the world in triumph, winning the Brahmin, not merely the Pariah, of every race. It has a spirituality unknown to Confucianism, a purity unknown to Islam, a vigour unknown to Buddhism, but in all those faiths there is a simplicity unknown to post-Christian Christianity—that is to say, the Christianity that began loading itself with Greek, Roman, and Jewish irrelevancies, the moment the Nazarene's successors got control. Of these irrelevancies, the dogma elaborated by metaphysical

theorists under a pagan emperor sixteen centuries ago presents no obstacle to those who, never having understood anything, are not dismayed by the impossibility of understanding that. Yet it presents serious obstacles to minds shrewd of discernment and long schooled in philosophy. It is the dogma they hear of first. Everywhere they torment the missionary with their derisive and unanswerable question, "What is the three-one?" So it comes about that the influential classes are reached last if at all.

Happily, Sabellianism has largely supplanted Trinitarianism among our Trinitarians here at home, and a benign heresy it is, in and of itself. But there occurs a sorry enough phenomenon when they recite their creed in church, where the real dogma stares them in the face. There are hymns, too, as Trinitarian, almost, as Trinitarianism, but no Sabellian hymns. Inevitably comes a sense of uneasiness at finding our lips Trinitarian, for the moment, and our convictions not. For in most minds there lurks a feeling that we should be honest in church.

Otherwise, what is religion? A kind of poetry?

A realm of experience where truth has its place when it suits the purpose but where falsity is as welcome or more so when it suits the purpose as well? Such questions as these are always rising up before the mind wherever modern men recite outworn creeds.

Much has been said, and on the whole very ill said, concerning outworn creeds, but it remains to explain why they wear out. There is nothing mysterious about it. Creeds wear out, not so much because they get old as because people get new. Nature affords always a fresh supply of people. By the same token, it behooves the church to afford always a new supply of creeds—either that, or to regard creeds as mere interesting snapshots of the past, to which no living mortal shall be asked to subscribe.

In this new day, we, also, are new. Not by the extremest subtlety of intellect can we repeat the mental processes by which theorists of the Fourth Century, A.D., evolved the Trinity. For one thing, modern education is teaching us to think consistently and with clearness. For another, the advance of knowledge has brought with it a con-

viction that truth is reasonable. But chiefly we have come to feel that the only reverent attitude toward the man of Nazareth presupposes a wish to see him as he was. He was no theologian. He was no Trinitarian. His creed never wears out. Even to-day he is newer than we are, and whoso but finds him shall be born again.

XIII

CHRISTIAN art—which has been more effective, even, than oral instruction in fastening theological ideas on the mind—could picture only what it could first imagine. It could not imagine the Trinity. But neither could it forget the Trinity, so we have numerous masterpieces portraying Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in relationship as theological as the exigencies of canvas and fresco permit. In such paintings the Holy Ghost is a dove.

A beautiful legend, of high poetic interest and charm, was the basis of that conception, and the symbol carried with it more of truth than does the very shadowy conception most believers now attempt to hold—and reproach themselves for not holding very successfully.

In their thought there hovers a nebulous being, who is ineffably sacred, as a sin against him cannot be forgiven. Why must he remain so nebu-

lous? Is he not the Third Person of the Trinity? Was he not vividly real to the man of Nazareth and to his pupils and to Jewish and Greek Christians in the First Century, A.D.?

These are natural questions, and in answering them it is as natural that we should inquire how the Nazarene came to speak of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, and what he meant. The idea was not new. It was written all through the old Jewish literature he studied with such patience. There he read passage after passage that mentioned the spirit of God. Old hymns reflected the idea. Old prophetic writings did the same. Old chronicles introduced many an episode with specific recognition of it.

As Jehovah was an anthropomorphic god, with the limitations anthropomorphism involves, Jewish thought found in his spirit an explanation of his influencing the affairs of men without visiting them in his own person. When it was not an angel who accomplished his will, it was his spirit.

Jewish legends—altogether crude, some of them—nevertheless illustrate the conception with remarkable clearness. For example, there is a

particularly crude legend, in which Balaam, the Mesopotamian trance-medium, threatens to curse Jehovah's people. Jehovah is much concerned. At all hazards this fell design of the Mesopotamian trance-medium's must be frustrated. So the spirit of God comes upon Balaam, and a nation is saved. Instead of cursing Jehovah's people, he blesses them.

Again, the spirit of God is made to explain unusual feats, either of strength or of courage or of skill. When a young lion roared against Samson, the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would rend a kid, and he had nothing in his hand. When the enemy were approaching in strength, the spirit of the Lord came into Gideon; immediately he blew a trumpet and went forth to war. On a different occasion, Jehovah called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting stones for setting.

But by no means crude was the ancient Jewish

prophet's idea that a prophet owed his power and his insight to this same wondrous spirit of God. When filled with power by the spirit of the Lord, and with judgment, and with might, he could prophesy boldly, charging Jacob with transgression and Israel with sin. Meanwhile a Jewish hymn besought Jehovah not to withdraw his holy spirit from his servant. In the whole realm of Jewish liturgy there is no more exalted petition than this—no, nor in any liturgy whatsoever. Chanted by Christians to-day, it expresses the very essence of religion, and seems almost to have been composed by the man of Nazareth himself.

For it was in this exalted sense that he accepted the ancient Jewish idea and made it his own. To him, it stood for that profoundest reality—the life of God in the soul of man. If a man sinned against that, there was no hope for the man. One could revile the Nazarene and be forgiven, but whoever blasphemed against the power within himself making for righteousness was to that extent a spiritual suicide and, therefore, beyond forgiveness. The harm had been done. It could not be undone.

Moreover, it was in this sense of a divine in-

dwelling that the rabbi of Nazareth bequeathed his belief to his followers. The spirit of God was to be their comforter, their guide, their teacher, for the spirit of God was at the same time the spirit of truth. And it was in this sense that the more discerning among his followers accepted it. Paul, speaking for such followers, could say that through it the love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts, for so it had.

Not all, however, were so discerning. Some even went back to the crude, ancient Jewish conception of the spirit, attributing to its influence certain hysterical manifestations that would otherwise have found no explanation at a time when hysteria was not understood. Those early Christians babbled—or at any rate, many of them did—and this babbling, though common enough among simple folk under intense religious excitement, was called speaking with tongues, as the babblers seemed to be discoursing in an unknown language.

Then, too, there were followers of the Nazarene who came to think the spirit was a person. One such follower wrote a biography of the Nazarene, and actually transcribed his own idea of the spirit

into various utterances attributed to his master. This conception was radically out of keeping with the old Jewish conception of the spirit. It was as radically out of keeping with standard early Christian conceptions of the spirit.

Here it is well to consider for a moment what kind of biographer he was. In the series collected for us his biography comes fourth, and differs from the others in certain of its characteristics. It contains no parables. It is almost wholly devoid of instruction bearing upon conduct. It is tinctured with current Greek philosophy. It is written in a distinctive style aglow with enraptured and adorable mysticism, but here and there defying close analysis of fact. Finally, it gives a different picture of the man himself—perhaps a truer picture, yet seen always as through stained glass. In other words, the author's personality colours everything he tells us of the man. It is an endearing personality, sweetly saintlike.

This fourth biographer gave theology its idea of the spirit as a person by quoting his master as using the masculine pronoun when referring to the spirit, though he also quotes his master as say-

ing that the spirit was the spirit of truth. Neither the one citation nor the other is exact. What the Nazarene taught and what the majority of his followers clearly remembered that he taught was that the spirit was the spirit of God. God is our comforter. God is our guide. God is our teacher. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. To such there is a commandment given by an early follower of the Nazarene: Quench not the spirit.

The self-reproachful believer who feels a certain vague but persistent consciousness of guilt because he cannot visualize the Third Person of the Trinity may find it helpful to recall that the Nazarene could not. Nor can any one. For the Holy Ghost is God, and no other exists. Trinitarianism to the contrary notwithstanding, the purest simplest, and most convincing monotheism is not denied to Christians.

This monotheism, once we accept it, reinforces our modern view of nature. We are learning that in reality all forces, life included, are one force. We are finding that all substance is in reality one substance, and to recognize that matter itself is

vibrant—that is to say, alive—which means, in a sense we are coming to appreciate, that spirit is all and in all. So we need no longer have two orders of ideas, one applicable only in the realm of things visible and the other only in the realm of things invisible. The same order of ideas applies to both, as there is essentially no distinction between those realms. All truth leads back to one truth: that the God of things visible is likewise the God of things invisible.

A young Jewish rabbi, though so Jewish that he could mistakenly believe himself the Messiah and so Jewish that he could mistake Jewish legends and Jewish superstition for actualities, had nevertheless a universality of mind so complete as to make his conception of God wholly consonant with the most modern scientific thought.

Hence the homage we pay him. The more our modern knowledge advances, the more devout the homage. Little though they realize it, savants in laboratories and philosophers in university quadrangles testify of him. For their conclusions, which he anticipated by nineteen centuries, show how great he was.

XIV

WELL after dark, so as not to be observed on the way, a leader of the most conservative Jewish denomination begged an interview with the Nazarene one evening and began by explaining why he had come.

It was because of the Nazarene's reputation as a healer. Though not in need of treatment, he had been greatly impressed, as he felt that no one could perform such numerous and astonishing cures unless he was at the same name a teacher ordained of God. Accordingly, this representative of some thousands of reactionaries, who were endeavouring to bring back not only a "blue" Saturday but the strictest conceivable observance of "blue" laws in general, consented to visit a radical and even addressed him as Rabbi.

Yet vast was his bewilderment when, in the course of their talk, the rabbi told him that only

those who were born anew could see the Kingdom of God.

Finding the Puritan so utterly nonplussed by this declaration, the Nazarene in his turn expressed bewilderment. How was it possible that a Puritan and Tory, bent on reviving the laws and customs of the ancients, should have failed to recognize that the ancients themselves believed in the new birth? Any one setting up to instruct his contemporaries should have known it. If the figure of speech was new, the idea was not.

That same idea had been David's when he begged God to create in him a new heart. It had been Isaiah's when he represented God as promising the faithful a new heart. It had been Ezekiel's when he represented God as promising the faithful a new spirit.

Yet there is much to be said in extenuation of the Pharisee's ignorance. Of the same mental type that to-day bestows an equal authority upon all parts of an ancient Jewish scroll, conceiving it to be inerrant throughout, he recalled numberless teachings that either cancelled the idea of the new birth or asserted its extreme opposite.

Except for rare glimmerings, we find in the literature of the Jewish ancients no intimation that God is a power making for righteousness or that the life of God in the soul of man works a reconstruction of character so complete as to amount virtually to a new birth. Jehovah, a magnified business man, was a bargainer. Provide him with the smell of burning meat, worship him in accordance with an exceedingly high-church ritual, and obey ten thousand taboos, some of which were moral, and he would give you long life, perennial health, prosperity in your ranching ventures, success in your quarrels, and a place in the sun for your country at the expense of the rightful inhabitants, on whom he had no pity. Disobey, and all manner of calamities would befall you. But in obeying, you were not helped to obey by Jehovah.

Such, briefly outlined, was the idea reiterated in ancient Jewish scrolls with a persistence that made it dominant in the minds of Jewish Puritans and Tories. And this Pharisee who could not recall the glimmerings of a loftier idea could recall numberless intimations of a still lower one. If

Jehovah was seldom a power making for righteousness, he was often a power making for villainy.

Once, at least, he came dangerously near demanding human sacrifice. He provided a substitute, it is true, but not until the father of the originally proposed victim had become a murderer at heart. In Egypt he dulled the conscience of Pharaoh and hardened the Egyptians' hearts, thus inspiring the opposition he was to get himself honour by defeating. At home, the greatest, perhaps, of all the prophets asked why God hardened the hearts of his people and made them err from his ways.

One answer, were we disturbed enough to attempt an explanation, would be to say that the old Jewish theology, such as it was, felt the need of a Satan. You can read the Old Testament half through before meeting with Satan, and, consequently, a great deal that might better have been attributed to a Satan got attributed to God. In war time the most infamous atrocities were perpetrated at his command. And we are told that when Saul cast his javelin at David, it was because Saul had been taken possession of by an evil spirit from God.

All this is legend; granted; but it was not legend to the Jewish Tory and Puritan. To him it was fact. It helped to mould his conception of God, and did it so effectively that there was no room in his thought for an idea of God as a power making for righteousness. Had he chosen, he could have quoted a legend in which, far from desiring men to become perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect, God is said to have resented their acquisition of a conscience.

The story of Adam, which is told us in our childhood, and which we give little reflection to thereafter, is, nevertheless, well worth re-examination. Adam fell; and with Adam fell man, says a theology still very popular. The sin of the first man changed his whole moral nature from a holy to a sinful state; which changed condition, being hereditary, has entered into all his descendants! Says an old couplet:

In Adam's fall,
We sinnèd all.

But why was Adam's sin so monstrous? He ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil. He had been forbidden to. But why was he forbidden? Right in the text, plainly stated, is the reason. By eating of the fruit he attained a knowledge of good and evil and became, to that extent, godlike.

Adam's acquisition of a godlike faculty, then, was the offense that changed his whole moral nature from a holy to a sinful state, which changed condition, being hereditary, has entered into all his descendants!

That the barbaric legend was picked up by the Jews during their enforced sojourn in Babylon, is probably true; but what concerns us now is the influence of the legend and its import upon the mind of the Jewish Puritan and Tory who came, under cover of darkness, to interview the strolling rabbi from Nazareth; alone, it was sufficient to exclude from his philosophy any thought of God as a power making for righteousness.

To him, the Nazarene's announcement that a man must be born anew was a revolutionary announcement destructive alike of Jewish orthodoxy and Jewish scripture. No one he had ever known believed it. If now he remembered that here and

there an ancient seer believed it momentarily, he was well aware that the brief illumination had had no profound effect. Moreover, he resented the announcement, and sought to entangle the Nazarene in an involved theological debate over it by affecting to take the metaphor literally.

The implied challenge failed of result. He was told that one might as well theorize about the wind that bloweth whither it listeth. Men hear its voice, but know not whence it comes or whither it goes. So is every one that is born of the spirit.

With the same quiet assertion of fact and the same reverent unwillingness to theorize about the fact, the young teacher bequeathed the idea of the new birth to his pupils, and they to theirs. Over and over again in their writings, it recurs. Speaking from experience and observation, as well as on the authority of their master, they declared that the twice born walked in newness of life. The old things passed away; behold, all things were become new. Men were transformed. Their very minds were renewed. If it could be said that they reflected as a mirror the glory of the Lord, it was because the divine power filled them

with new life and a new godliness. Begotten of God, they were new creatures, dead to sin, and partakers of the divine nature.

This superb conception, as real as it is superb, the man of Nazareth was the first to grasp. Others had touched it, but only with hesitant finger-tips and at rare moments. He held it fast. He proclaimed no mere transitory consciousness of the divine indwelling, he proclaimed an abiding consciousness so overwhelming in its potency that there emerged in the world a new type of man, the Christian.

This, even had he no further claim upon believers, would justify our faith in him as the most exalted religious genius of all time. For the new man he created was not dependent upon human resourcefulness alone; the life of God was in him, making for righteousness; he had been born again. And to the twice born there could be given a wholly new ideal, Christianity. It meant laying upon the new man a yoke far heavier than any of his predecessors had borne; actually, the new man was to find his life by losing it. Yet, because of a new birth, the yoke became easy. The burden itself became light.

XV

THERE is no new thing under the sun, and yet there is. When a man grasps firmly what others have but touched with hesitant finger-tips, the thing may be old, but the grasp is new. When he sees clearly and consistently and abidingly what others have seen and then refused to see, the vision he commands is altogether new. In old Jewish writings we find material for a very splendid anthology of aphorism and ascription proclaiming the fatherhood of God. We find attempts to believe in it. We find eloquent, poetic assertions that the old Jewish writers did believe in it. Yet not until the prophet of Nazareth grasped and held it, was the idea of God's fatherhood a dominant idea in any human mind.

The same ancient poet who calls Jehovah a father of the fatherless pictures him in the same poem as eager to smite his enemies through the head. In another poem, after speaking of Jehovah

as his father, his God, he pronounces him a God very terrible in the council of the holy ones and to be feared above all that are round about him. Prophets, in their turn, could declare that he had not dealt with his people after their sins; though their sins were as scarlet, they became as white as snow; yet a prophet equally as authentic could announce that, in his wrath against his people, Jehovah would gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. By divine command, the city was to be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravished.

Whole treasuries of superb metaphor were exhausted in praise of Jehovah's loving kindness and tender mercy. For example, he was a shepherd gathering the lambs in his arms and carrying them in his bosom. But the fear of the Lord was still the beginning of wisdom. No Jew could overlook Jehovah's threat to punish the disobedient by making them eat the flesh of their own sons and the flesh of their own daughters. Nor could any Jew forget his dealings with the man caught gathering sticks on Saturday. Jehovah commanded that man to be put to death, says the chronicle, and all the congregation brought him without the camp

and stoned him with stones. Besides, there was Uzzah's case. When the Jews were bringing back the sacred box containing their religious treasures, the oxen drawing the cart on which the box rested, stumbled; to keep the box from overturning, Uzzah put out his hand and steadied it. The account is circumstantial.

Convoying the box went David and all the house of Israel, playing before the Lord with all manner of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps and psalteries and with timbrels and with castanets and with cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen tripped. Then was the anger of the Lord kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him for his error, and there he died by the ark of God.

David, though a bloodthirsty enough barbarian, himself, felt that here common justice had been outraged. As the chronicler goes on to say, David was displeased because the Lord had broken forth upon Uzzah. However, David could turn Jehovah's moral obtuseness to good account, on occasion—for instance, when he had deeply offended

Jehovah by taking a census of the Jewish people, and was given his choice of three punishments: seven years of famine in the land, or three days' pestilence in the land, or David to be hounded by his enemies for three years. Reminding himself that Jehovah was merciful—he had often called him merciful in his poems—he decided that it would be better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men, and answered the Lord's message accordingly. Whereupon, Jehovah punished David by killing seventy thousand entirely innocent Jews.

At this point, we might appropriately pause to remark that theology, in order to explain why this same Jehovah eventually sacrificed his own son on our behalf, has told us that it was because of his divine sense of justice—to which explanation our rejoinder might be: When was Jehovah ever just? But we have not recited these Jewish folk-tales as proof that Jehovah was grossly and habitually unjust, visiting upon offenders a penalty out of all proportion to the offense; we have recited them as proof that, while the Jews could rhapsodize eloquently over his loving kindness, his tender mercy,

and his fatherliness, they could dramatize in their folk-tales a deity neither kind nor merciful nor fatherly. After that, no choral ascriptions in tabernacle or temple and no prophetic ascriptions on parchment could get his fatherliness believed in. Never mind what poets or dervishes said he was; folk-tales, accepted as history, said the opposite—and too often the poets and dervishes, themselves, said the opposite.

The first mortal ever really to believe in the fatherhood of God was the Nazarene. He was the first ever to speak of God constantly as his father. He was the first ever to speak of God constantly as the father of us all, and to bid us so address him in prayer. He was the first to proclaim, boldly and unequivocally, that God was love and only love and could never be anything else.

It was heresy. It denied, completely, the old Jewish idea of a vindictive, retaliatory God. So heretical was it, indeed, that, on one occasion when the young rabbi ventured to set forth his idea of God's fatherhood in its entirety, he told a story about a certain man who had two sons, the younger of whom was a prodigal. Not a word of explana-

tion followed the story. Explanation would have been dangerous, for the father in the story showed no justice whatever—only love.

Even to-day, there are theologians willing to disregard its meaning. A standard Bible Dictionary lists it among parables illustrating the growth of the kingdom. To say it illustrated the divine repudiation of vindictive and retaliatory justice would be to invalidate the plan of salvation worked out by theologians who, instead of following the Nazarene, have followed his followers.

Strangely inconsistent his followers were. They would discourse about the father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforted them in all their affliction, that they might be able to comfort them that were in any affliction; yet commonly they mixed with their teachings concerning God's fatherhood a reminiscence of the old Jewish idea of God as a grim and terrible avenger, thus laying the cornerstone of their own theology, their own elaborately wrought out plan of salvation, whereas the man himself bade his little flock have no fear, for it was their father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. He had no elaborately worked out

plan of salvation. He had no theology. Except that he believed himself the Messiah, he would have been a Universalist.

Instead, he taught eternal damnation. John the Baptist had taught it, and to him John was Elijah reincarnated, therefore not to be gainsaid. According to John, the wicked would writhe in unquenchable fire. According to the man of Nazareth, all nations were to be summoned before the throne on the last day. But who was to sit on the throne and judge them? God? We are clearly told in his own words, specifically, that the judge was to be the man of Nazareth, himself, in his rôle as Messianic king.

There stands the prophecy. For nineteen centuries it has been misread, though nothing could be plainer. As John had predicted that he who came after him would gather his wheat into his garner and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire, so, with an immaterial change of figure, the Nazarene declared that he would separate sheep from goats when he returned as Messianic king. He would set the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left. Then he would bid those on his right hand inherit

the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Then, also, he would bid those on his left hand depart into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. These would go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Heretics without number have tried to reason away the horrors of damnation, some contending that the fire was only figurative, others that it was not eternal; and many of them, for so doing, were subjected to torments in this life scarcely less cruel than those they sought to spare the wicked in the next. But this Judgment Day, which has terrified Christendom for nineteen centuries—when was it to be? According to the Nazarene, early in the Second Century, A.D., at latest. For not one of his hearers could have lived to a later time, and he said that some of them would see it.

Here again we might pause to inquire why theologians, instead of elaborating a scheme of salvation to make possible our escape from awful doom on that day, were not more in haste to assure us that the day had long since gone by, quite harmlessly. But they, in their turn, would then be free

to ask us if we think evil brings no consequences, and we should find ourselves at a loss for evidence that it does not. Natural law would be against us.

Yet is natural law vindictive? On the contrary, we are coming more and more to realize that natural law is benignant, and that an eternal goodness, as well as an eternal reasonableness, pervades the universe. It desires not the death of a sinner, but would have him turn from his wicked ways and live. Whom it loves it chastens. For natural law is God's will. As there is divinity in man, so there is humanity in God, our Father.

To the rabbi of Nazareth, accordingly, we owe not only the most appealing article in our modern creed but the profoundest concept in our philosophy. If one spirit is over all, under all, in all and through all, so that in that spirit we live, move, and have our being, then the name for that spirit is Love.

XVI

An Italian once thought he could reach Asia by sailing his caravels westward. He was mistaken. Yet to him we owe half of a world. The mediæval alchemists thought they could find the elixir of life and a magic stone that would transmute baser metals into gold. They were mistaken, but to them we owe the beginning of chemistry. Old astrologers among the Arabs thought they could tell fortunes by the stars. Again it was a mistake, yet to those mistaken star-gazers we owe the beginnings of astronomy and to astronomy our conception of the universe in space. All the great innovators have been mistaken. We judge them, not by their mistakes, but by their achievements.

Small indeed, relatively, were such achievements as the mere discovery of missing continents or the founding of mere sciences. In asserting that the Nazarene is to be judged, not by his mistakes, but by his achievements, we are far from ranking

him with Italian mariners, mediæval alchemists, or star-gazing Arabs. His achievements forbid. No other great innovator is in the least comparable to him, for he explored, not the realm of things physical, but the realm of things spiritual. He was mistaken about his Messiahship; sun and moon were not to be extinguished; stars were not to fall, no preliminary martyrdom was required, nor were sinners to be plunged into lakes of fire; yet to him we owe our knowledge that we are God's children; as he proclaimed a new and altogether revolutionary idea of God, so he proclaimed a new and altogether revolutionary idea of man. He was the first human being ever to understand what human nature is.

In old Jewish folk-tales, being human had meant being bad. One such Jewish folk-tale relates how Jehovah, when he saw the wickedness of man in the earth and perceived that every imagination of the thought of man's heart was evil continually, drowned practically the whole race; but even this failed to improve man. The leading survivor figured immediately in an affair of drunkenness and scandal, we are told. As time went on, and patient

chroniclers set in array the heroes of Jewish piety —their best—they portrayed bigots, tyrants, impostors, slave-holders, polygamists, adulterers, murderers, and gory chieftains innumerable; a philanthropist, never.

A Jewish canticle, said to have been written by the lustful and blood-guilty monarch whose verses predominate in the ancient Jewish hymn book, declares that God created man a little lower than the angels, and goes into detail regarding the glory and honour with which man is thus crowned. The glory and honour amount, he assures us, to dominion over all sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. This by no means impressively glorious or honourable list of glories and honours is led up to by loud protestations of astonishment that Jehovah should have so exalted man. It is followed by an outburst of praise. That a sublime spiritual heritage is man's birthright, and that a sublime spiritual heritage is the central fact of his nature, had not so much as entered the poet's thought.

A profound moral pessimism pervades the Jew-

ish classics. Conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, man is by nature depraved, they assume; there is none found doing good, no, not one; the heart is deceitful above all things; the heart of the sons of men is full of evil—madness is in their heart while they live.

These melancholy phrases have been invaluable to theologians bent on proving that the first sin of the first man changed his whole moral nature and that the changed condition, being hereditary, has entered into all his descendants, ourselves included. Equally serviceable have been those phrases to the spiritual terrorist.

Fear of an approaching judgment day, despite the clear announcement that it was to arrive early in the Second Century, A. D., at latest, is still dormant in the popular mind. To awaken that fear you have only to quote the ancient Jews on the moral nature of man, apply the libellous estimate to your hearers, and thus induce the state of mind known to theology as conviction of sin. Then down your carpeted aisle or sawdust trail go penitents, quaking. They quake to good purpose, sometimes, and conversion is real; but too often it

appears that a terrorist runs grave risks when he attempts to make permanent modern Christians by means of an ancient Jewish libel.

Very curious, now and then, have been the devices with which theology sought to sustain the libel. If you pointed to the virtues in a sweet and beautiful character—the character, let us say, of a noble but unbaptized saint—theology would declare that such virtues had no merit in the sight of God, as God prized only the virtues attained through faith in a vicarious atonement. Indeed, time was, not so very long ago, either—when theology announced that even faith in a vicarious atonement might be futile. Unless God had foreknown, predestined, and foreordained a man's salvation, the man could not be saved. God had his elect. He had chosen them from the beginning, before the foundation of the world. These, and these alone, were called.

Many a ghastly night our grandfathers lay awake in torment wondering if they were called, wondering if they were elect, wondering if, from the beginning, God had foreknown, predestined, and foreordained their salvation. According to

the theologians of our grandfathers' time, there was small chance that he had. According to the theologians of our grandfathers' time, God had foreknown, predestined, foreordained, elected, and called the vast majority of his children to writhe eternally in lakes of fire. With that end in view he had created them.

Much better might our grandfathers have remained awake wondering if it was not possible that the theologians knew altogether too much about God—and too little about the man of Nazareth. Their theologians were not following the man of Nazareth when they proclaimed these monstrous denials of divine decency, they were following his followers, who, in the very face of his warnings, had followed the false teachers he had predicted would arise.

Nowhere was the Nazarene rabbi less successful than in his effort to eradicate from the minds of his pupils the old Jewish pessimism regarding human nature. He rejected it utterly, himself. Never once in his recorded teaching does he intimate that, because Adam offended Jehovah by acquiring a conscience and becoming to that extent godlike, all

of Adam's descendants inherit total depravity. Only one type of man seemed to the Nazarene hopelessly wicked. That was the type of man who, having seen the light, prefers darkness—in other words, the type of man who, deliberately and of choice, sins against the divine spirit within his own soul.

As concerned the rest, the Nazarene saw good men as well as bad, and, in at least one of his recorded sayings, implied that perhaps the good men greatly predominated; for a single unrighteous person needing repentance, there might be ninety-nine righteous persons needing no repentance. Even atrocious sinners were perfectible. There was nothing in his teachings about their having to be foreknown, or predestined, or foreordained, or elected, or called. He was recklessly untheological. Never having heard that faith in a vicarious atonement was essential to salvation, he went on for three continuous years making converts by the thousand and telling them they were saved, although nothing capable of being interpreted as a vicarious atonement had as yet occurred.

Recklessly untheological, too, was the story he

told of the young prodigal, who repented and came home to his father. There was no advocate with the father to plead the boy's case. There was no reference on the boy's part to someone's having suffered already the punishment the boy himself deserved. There was no struggle between justice and mercy in the father's mind. Still less did the father assume that the boy was a hereditary criminal, totally depraved. He had repented and come home, where he had always belonged. It was in the nature of things that he should belong there; he was his father's son.

Not only in symbolic fiction, but by example, the Nazarene strove to make clear his faith in human nature. By preference, he addressed his message, oftentimes, to human nature's least promising representatives, saying that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost.

He went further, once, and called a notorious social outcast to membership in the company of private pupils who were to carry on his work after his death.

A Jew named Levi held a job as tax-collector under the Roman administration. It was a despic-

able job—pro-Roman, in effect, and sullied with graft—a job no decent Jew would touch. Yet there sat Levi, a Jew, gouging his compatriots in the interest of their oppressors, until one day the man of Nazareth interrupted. After that, there was another Levi, so altogether different that he received another name. To-day, he is seen among the Twelve in frescoes of the Last Supper, and known to history as Matthew the Apostle.

No other single instance more superbly illustrates the Nazarene's faith in humanity. It was a heterodox faith, but invincible. It was one secret of his influence. If he asked men to believe in him, they were not unaware that already he believed in them. And it has been one secret of his influence ever since. Tell men that they are by nature depraved, and they will justify your assertion; tell them they are sons of God, and they strive their uttermost to justify that assertion. This is not only good psychology, it is good scripture; for we read that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

If the Nazarene was the first man ever to believe in humanity, he was not the last. Idealists

still preserve his belief. When told that human nature is always the same, meaning that human nature is essentially evil and must remain so, they reply that it cannot so remain because it is not essentially evil. Whereupon, generally amid laughter, the idealist hears that he is a dreamer, far ahead of his time, for, whether consciously or not, he has been echoing the thought of a young idealist who died on a cross nineteen centuries ago.

It was a revolutionary thought then. It is a revolutionary thought now; yet therein lies the hope of the world.

XVII

Ask a hundred Christians at random what Christianity is, and for one Christian who tells you that it is a way of living, there will be ninety-nine who will tell you that it is a way of believing. By faith we are saved, say the vast majority; whosoever believeth shall have eternal life. And yet they hasten to add that good deeds are as essential to salvation as if the promise had never been given. Hence a very troublesome matter for theologians; faith saves us, and at the same time does not.

To believers, this self-contradiction presents no very serious difficulties, and such difficulties as it does present they either disregard or, recognizing them clearly, seek to remove them by quoting an early Jewish Christian who said that God would reckon faith as righteousness.

To worldlings, however, the self-contradiction seems at once grotesque and immoral. In the legal fiction that reckons faith as righteousness and in

the salvation granted as a reward for correct theological opinions, they see an affront to logic and an infringement of justice—that is, if they think keenly about it at all. For the most part they do not. For the most part they pass it by with what we might call indifference were it less perceptibly tinctured with disdain, and so we find in the average man's philosophy a conviction that if he "just does about right" there is no need for anxiety regarding the things of the spirit. Millions of men make this their creed. They have their reward. In their calm, self-complacent, easy-going rejection of faith, it is noticeable that they just do about wrong.

For centuries, now, theology has preached salvation by faith. Here is the result—a result that impels us once more to ask if it is not possible that theology knew a great deal too much about God and a great deal too little about the man of Nazareth. He never preached salvation by faith. He denied it. He never implied that faith could be reckoned as righteousness. He said it could not. In a memorable speech he declared that when he came again as Messianic judge, he would have no

mercy upon those who, having disobeyed his commands, tried to escape retribution by proclaiming their faith in him.

Drowsy readers get the impression that he was always talking about faith, so often does the word occur in his biographies. Reading those same biographies more alertly, we find that, with rare exceptions, he was talking only of faith in its relation to healing. He cured by suggestion. If his patients refused to believe that he could cure them, suggestion was impossible. There were villages where, because of the villagers' hostility of mind, he could perform no cures. On the other hand, there were exceptionably amenable cases; they delighted him, and of one such case he remarked, enthusiastically, that he had not found so great faith, no, not in his entire practice. Meanwhile, he told his pupils that any doubt they might harbour as to their own healing power would limit their power to heal. When they reported a failure, he said that they had failed because they had neglected to fortify their belief in themselves by fasting and prayer.

It was natural that a faith-healer, training pupils to heal, should comment frequently on faith—

his faith, their faith, the patient's faith—and, as he believed that faith-healing was in reality divine healing, comment frequently on its religious significance. But all this had nothing whatever to do with so-called saving faith. It was in the writings of his followers, years afterward, that faith, in the theological sense, attained its mountain-peak conspicuousness and importance.

Even then, the faith they glorified was another virtue, quite, from the mere passive acceptance of dogma. It was faith active, faith heroic. In those days words were deeds and opinions adventures—more so, even, than during the Nazarene's brief career of personal leadership. Unlike the man himself, his followers were schismatics. He had sought merely to renovate Judaism from within; his followers established a new religion outside the Jewish fold. He had sought merely to liberalize and elevate the Jewish code. His followers not only repudiated the Jewish code, but urged others to repudiate it, and plotted Judaism's complete overthrow, all this in defiance of Jehovah's warning that apostasy would precipitate an orgy of divine frightfulness in the course of which rebels

would be made to eat the flesh of their own sons and the flesh of their own daughters.

Not unnaturally, Judaism hit back. And when Christianity assailed paganism with the same militant determination, paganism, too, hit back. There were mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonment, stonings, sawings asunder, slayings with the sword. Believers, of whom the world was not worthy, faced woe and destitution, skulking in deserts and mountains and caves and holes of the earth. No wonder their eulogists glorified faith! Faith, they saw, was what had sustained courage.

And on its intellectual side it was no longer the very simple, very easy, very natural faith of the Nazarene. He had died. His followers taught that not only his spirit but his body had broken from the tomb and gone up into the sky. They had deified him. They declared that he had always been a god. They theorized about his relation to the Father, his relation to mankind, and the meaning of his death. The more they theorized, the more they drifted back to their old, pre-Christian habits of thought, until they came to believe that God, who anciently demanded strict obedience to

the code in exchange for his benefactions to mankind, must still demand something. What?

The first theorizer to suggest that faith would be a fair exchange for the sacrificial death of a slain divinity may have had his misgivings, afterward. If so, it was then too late. Everywhere went the news that that heroic and intellectually very different thing, faith, would satisfy a bargaining God, who, so the theorizers went on to say, would reckon it for righteousness or, at all events, as a kind of substitute for righteousness. And thus was Christianity burdened with one dogma more.

Among the Nazarene's followers there was a Jewish Christian known as James the Just. Remembering that the Nazarene had told in plain language what would happen to pretenders who, in the last judgment, tried to substitute faith in the Nazarene for obedience to his commands, James the Just came out with a pamphlet attacking the new theory and clearing up for ever, had theologians but heeded him, its confusion of ideas. He said believing, in and of itself, was a small matter —devils did that much; the faith that counted was the faith that bore fruit; by works a man was justi-

fied and not only by faith. Nearly fourteen hundred years later, a theologian named Luther pronounced this pamphlet an epistle of straw.

On one occasion—a momentous one, since by accident it laid the foundation of a powerful and still very illustrious hierarchy—the Nazarene himself so eulogized faith as to make it seem tantamount, almost, to good works. Peter had announced his belief in his master's Messiahship. In reply, the Nazarene called Peter his rock on which he would found his church—meaning, of course, a new order of devotion within the Jewish fold. But observe. The biographer to whom we owe our knowledge of this incident takes pains to emphasize the Nazarene's astonishment at finding a pupil convinced that he was the Messiah, and you read the biography more than half through before coming to the story. Until that momentous occasion, the Nazarene had gone on without asking—and apparently without caring—who and what his own pupils thought he was.

Strange enough this seems, yet it was in keeping with his habitual policy. He required little of faith. Of obedience he required everything. When

choosing a pupil, the question uppermost in his mind was never: Does he believe? Instead, he asked such questions as, Will he come? Will he follow? Will he learn? Will he obey? To illustrate the only plan of salvation he understood, he told of the prodigal who went home; the boy believed or he would not have gone home, but the great point was, he went. Then, too, the rabbi of Nazareth taught that obedience was a teacher. They who did the will of him that sent him would soon know of the doctrine. Before learning of him, men must take his yoke upon them; then the learning, like the yoke, was easy. And when he asked men to believe in him, he demanded, not a mere theological assent, but the simple, natural, instinctive fidelity whose root and whose flower is love—and whose yield is character.

Theologically, what was there for them to believe in? The fatherhood of God? That is not theology—theology obscures it. The sonship of man? Theology obscures that also. The virgin birth? The deity of the Nazarene? The Trinity? Salvation by faith? Not one of these purely theological fictions had he ever heard of.

The articles in the creed he made the test of faith were few but vital. Chiefly, they propounded such fundamentals as: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; Blessed are the merciful; Blessed are the pure in heart; Blessed are the peacemakers; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; and even, Love your enemies, Bless them that curse you, Do good to them that hate you, and Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.

According to the Nazarene, salvation was obedience. Yet obedience presupposed faith. Only faith would enable a man to obey such commands as these. For through faith alone comes the life of God into a human soul, bringing the power that makes for righteousness. Only by recognizing his own sonship and the divine fatherhood can a man attain the faith that transfigures character, and, in its moral as well as its spiritual result, is nothing less than a new birth.

The Nazarene was the first ever to proclaim this. He was the first ever to comprehend it. He was the first ever to apply it. To a faith that glowed always within him, filling the whole man, he owed the splendour of his matchless personality.

XVIII

It is still orthodox to speak of the Nazarene as a lonely figure, despised and rejected of men; and so he is, to-day. Half-filled churches pay him an ever-diminishing homage, while the world outside pays him none. Persistent misrepresentation of the man by his own followers has borne fruit abundantly; whereas, when the man himself was known, he was not lonely. Crowds—unmanageable crowds, sometimes—swarmed after him. Save by a minority, he was neither rejected nor despised during his lifetime.

Four biographers have reported his career. They agree in portraying, not a lonely man, not a despised man, not a rejected man, but incomparably the most popular man of his day.

Though his hold upon the public was largely the result of his skill in drugless healing, he had another gift, perhaps even more attractive; he was an artist—a brilliantly effective teller of short

stories. And the stories he told had something unusual about them. You listened, aware merely of being entertained. Afterward, they made you think. You got to pondering about God. For days and weeks you pondered; then, if you were the right sort of person, a truth, altogether new and surprising, dawned upon you. Instead of feeling that it had been given you from without, you felt that it had come from within.

On occasion, the story-teller could forget his art and recite aphorisms. A biographer of his reproduces an open-air address delivered on a hilltop and consisting almost entirely of moral epigrams. It was not a sermon; it could hardly be called a lecture; it was a text-book spoken aloud. In general, however, he preferred the story form —that is to say, the parable. Each parable he explained later to his pupils in private, but let his audience go away with its import left wholly to their own deciphering. Some would come to understand; some would understand at once—as he put it, they that had ears would hear. If some were too dense or too hostile ever to understand—well, so be it. He would not cast pearls before

swine. The swine would in that case turn and rend him and, by that very act, become more swinish than before.

But the principal point, and the point chiefly controlling his custom, was the extreme unlikelihood of ever impressing truth from without. Even if now and then a dense or hostile hearer seemed actually to recognize truth, it would be a poor recognition, like assenting to a ready-made creed. Personal beliefs were what he wanted to develop —beliefs a man would hold, not because he had been commanded to hold them and given in, but because somehow they had dawned on him. He was that kind of believer himself.

Philosophers say there are three types of believers—the rationalist, the traditionalist, and the mystic. The Nazarene rabbi was no rationalist. We never find him arguing himself into a belief; for nothing worth the proving can be proved, and he knew it. If he was a traditionalist, he was at the same time daringly independent of tradition, never accepting a maxim merely because the ancients had thought it true. Invariably he tested a maxim by his own sense of truth. If that pro-

nounced it false, he rejected it, ancients or no ancients, and was disturbed by no ecclesiastical assertion that a leader must indorse all the teachings of his church or get out. Many a teaching of Judaism he refused to indorse and many a teaching of Judaism he attacked—but stayed in. How else could he hope to regenerate Judaism?

In calling him a mystic—for so is every one who believes that the sense of truth is the test of truth and upon whom truth dawns instead of being reasoned out or borrowed—we are far from classing him with the spiritual dreamers or vigil-keepers in whose minds truth is poetically indefinite and philosophically nebulous. He showed the exactness, oftentimes, of a lawyer, and nothing in his mentality suggests the mysticism that delights to induce ecstasies and visions by mortifying the flesh. Visions he had none. Despite the well-known legend, he was not given to fasting. Unlike his cousin, the Baptist, he came eating and drinking, though he permitted others to fast. It was their affair. He neither taught nor practised asceticism in any form, and it is only rarely that we read of his withdrawing alone into the mountains

to pray all night. A fine, vigorous, open-air wholesomeness marked his way of life. He was a great pedestrian. So, if we speak of him as a mystic, it is in the sense, merely, of one whose beliefs come, not from without, but from within.

All genuine beliefs come that way. They dawn. Knowledge from without or hints from without may suggest them, but they spring into radiant vitality only when an inner light makes them ours. Once ours from within, they remain ours. In the four biographies of the Nazarene there is nowhere an intimation that his faith was ever clouded with misgiving. Even the legend of his temptation in the wilderness says nothing of any temptation to doubt. His dying words, though often quoted as evidence that he thought God had deserted him, meant no more than other men's dying words do—that is to say, nothing. They prove only that, in a paroxysm of physical torment after such strain as neither mind nor body can withstand, he cried out. The words have no significance. No such victim's last words ever did have.

Among the young rabbi's pupils there was a mystic of a different type, more nearly resembling the

mediæval. In talking with that pupil—his favourite of them all, we are told—the young rabbi would speak of himself, imaginatively, as the true vine, or as the door, or as the good shepherd, or as the way, the truth, and the life. Long afterward, when the pupil wrote a biography of his master, these poetic phrases were still so fresh in his memory that he forgot how seldom his master used them. All his transcriptions of remembered discourses by the Nazarene are phrased in very much that style. Broadly speaking, they are misrepresentative, yet even here we find a reflection of the Nazarene's attitude toward faith. In his free use of metaphor—at times it was free almost to the point of license—he showed how willingly he could leave the interpretation to his hearers. He was not dictating truth. He was suggesting it. He was not trying to see how much could be imposed from without, but waiting to see how much would dawn from within.

And yet this same young rabbi could at times be dictatorial to a degree unheard of. He would enter a synagogue or the great temple, and there, with no authority save his own, assume the rôle

of a law-giver greater even than Moses. His utterance had no mysticism about it then. It had an awful precision, merciless in its havoc of shams, hypocrisies, and sacred sins. No such conscience as his had ever been seen before. No such voice had ever spoken. The righteousness he proclaimed was a new righteousness—the righteousness of a new humanity, whose prototype he was. He no longer suggested. Kinglike, he gave command, and bade the world obey, as well it might, for out of the deeps of his soul, where dwelt the life of God, came the new laws he proclaimed, and already they were obeyed—by the king himself.

In the light of this power he asserted over conduct, would it not appear that his emblem, instead of being the cross, should be the sceptre?

The cross was needless—the more tragic on that account, and the more pitiful, but representing only the Nazarene's mistaken idea of his Messiahship. Yet for lack of his sceptre the world is a lost world still. No sooner had the Nazarene found martyrdom than his followers began erecting mountains of metaphysical speculation upon the mystery of his death and reflecting little if at all

upon the great, outstanding fact of his life—namely, that he demanded obedience. They had no craven motive in so doing—no suspicion that a time would soon come when, though his cross surmounted the spires of Christendom, his sceptre would be smitten from his hand.

Just that has occurred. And just that is why a majority of mankind in every generation has scorned Christianity. It has its Churches of the Advent, its Churches of the Redeemer, its Churches of the Trinity, but as yet no Church of the Obedience. The Church of the Obedience, when it comes, will not be mourning the plight of a despised and rejected Nazarene, nor will men despise and reject the Church of the Obedience.

XIX

LIKE other rabbis, the Nazarene was a lawyer—that is to say, an authority on jurisprudence because a profound student of old Jewish legal works. We have access to them. Quite as if nineteen centuries had not gone by, we can follow him in his studies, reading what the man himself read, encountering the same legal absurdities, the same legal monstrosities, the same legal futilities and ineptitudes.

For example, we learn in those ancient statute books that Jehovah pronounced it a crime to mar the corners of one's beard. We find him declaring it as criminal to wear cloth of mingled wool and linen or to plough with an ox and a donkey together. We come upon his legally prescribed cure for the leprosy of walls and of garments. Still more surprising, we note that his list of outlawed fowls includes the bat. The bat, we are told, is a fowl no Jew may eat.

Ten laws, now recited in Christian churches, were said to have been first promulgated on a mountain top and afterward, according to the story, chiselled on the slabs of stone by Jehovah's own finger. One of the ten laws prohibited art, another forbade work on Saturday, two condone slavery, and the Jehovah held responsible for all ten declares himself a polytheist, jealous of other gods.

It is true that, soon after prohibiting art, Jehovah is found ordering seraphs of beaten gold for his sanctuary and blue, purple, and scarlet pomegranates to adorn the skirts of his clergymen. Yet the edict against art is explicit and all-inclusive; Jews were not only forbidden to bow down to works of art after they had made them; they were forbidden to make them; there was to be no graven image nor the likeness of any form that was in heaven above or that was in the earth beneath or that was in the water supposed to exist under the earth. A single edict throttled the art impulse of an entire race. Except for certain embellishments of worship, the Jews had no sculpture. They never tolerated painting. Our standard

portrait of the Nazarene, consequently, is based, not upon an early artist's conception, but upon a descriptive passage in one of several manifestly spurious biographies.

That portrait appears now in many a stained-glass window, and beneath it Christians recite the law prohibiting art. They recite it on Sunday, and in the next breath recite a law hallowing Saturday, though Saturday they profane. Then, too, they recite laws definitely mentioning slaves but nowhere condemning slavery. Slaves must be given a day off on Saturday. No man must covet his neighbour's slaves, be they manservants or maidservants. Both are spoken of. They are mentioned along with cattle.

Few Christians take too seriously the statutes prohibiting art, hallowing Saturday, condoning slavery and pronouncing God a polytheist, jealous of rival gods. Even among conservatives we find rudiments, at least, of a liberalism first taught by old Jewish dervishes and then obscured and finally, in the precepts of the Nazarene, blazing up into a spirit new upon earth and altogether revolutionary. Despite his belief that he had come, not

to destroy, but to fulfil, he was the most iconoclastic young jurist in all history.

The law needed him. While it would be possible to discover in it the material for a really noble and inspiring system of ethics, Jewish law was mainly a priest ridden law, over-emphasizing trivialities, under-emphasizing fundamentals, and straining out gnats while swallowing camels. Now and then the things strained out belonged out, but the ability to overlook serious ethical considerations remained. For instance, there was a statute directing what one should do with an animal that had died a natural death. It must not be eaten. So far, excellent, though few of us would see religion in not eating it; but what comes next in that statute? Lo and behold, thou mayest sell it to the foreigner!

This sort of thing infuriated the Nazarene. While he never attacked the Jewish dietary code and while he never attacked ceremonialism merely for being ceremonial, he rose up in indignation whenever he found propriety substituted for principle. That, so he perceived, was the common Jewish defect. For centuries, now, the law had

been in operation. It had not produced saints. Constantly and by quantity-production it had turned out humbugs, and the thing was still going on.

All around him the Nazarene saw Jews sanctimoniously fussy about not eating this and not eating that, scrupulous in the religious niceties of beard-trimming, dress and spiritual etiquette—Jews who had never in their lives worn wool mixed with linen, or hitched an ox and a donkey to the same plough, or treated walls for leprosy in the wrong manner, or broken Saturday, or made a graven image or the likeness to any form that was in heaven above or that was in the earth beneath or that was in the water beneath the earth, but who were scoundrels for all that.

A great figure they were cutting, some of them. If piety required a Jew to fast, they would fast twice as often as was stipulated and go about with a famished look on their faces, courting admiration and getting it. If piety required a Jew to wear a border on his robe, they wore borders double the stipulated width. If piety required a Jew to wear

a scripture text tied around his head, they tied theirs on with extra broad straps. If piety required a Jew to give a share of his income to the church, they tithed even the littlest herbs and seeds in their gardens, and bragged about it afterward. In the meeting-house they were always conspicuous in front seats, on the street always hankering for salaams.

There was no comic press in those days. There were no music-halls. There was little joking. A more humourless race than the Jews of the First Century, A.D., never lived. Instead of laughing at these spiritual swaggerers, they ko-towed to them, hung upon their lips, and abetted their endeavour to run the country.

The Nazarene well knew in what direction they sought to run it—back to Moses and Jehovah, or, rather, back to a travesty of Moses and back to a caricature of Jehovah. For they were not content with the law, even at its worst. In building what they called a fence around it, they ordered new fussinesses, new boredoms, new stupidities until, had they had their way, they would have produced not only religious cranks throughout Palestine but

arch-hypocrites throughout Palestine into the bargain.

At the risk of his life, and barely escaping with it at times, the young jurist from Nazareth attacked them. Blind leaders of the blind, they were frauds, he said. They were like white-washed tombs. They were like cups and dishes clean outside, foul within. Moreover, they were a menace. They had taken away the key of knowledge. They had not entered in, themselves, and those who were entering in, they hindered. Changing the figure of speech, he said they bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and laid them on men's shoulders—burdens they themselves would not lift a finger to move. To their faces he said it. Across a dinner-table once, he talked in this vein to a Pharisee whose guest he was.

Publicly, he warned his hearers against the leaven—or, as moderns say, the microbe—of Pharisaism. The contagion, once it got hold of a man, would spread all through him until he, too, would be valuing letter above spirit, prizing form more than substance, and letting rites and ceremonies and observances—mere trifles of religious etiquette

and legal punctilio—become a substitute for mercy, honesty, and straight living.

For the first time in history a lawyer had seen through the law—not only through the Jewish legal system, but through all legal systems whatsoever—yes, and through all legalistic systems of religion. At best, they merely skim the surface of morality. In dealing with sin, they treat symptoms, not the disease. They interest themselves in outward behaviour invariably; in the springs of action never.

Others before the Nazarene had denounced hypocrisy and, in occasional tirades against it, urged an inner righteousness. An old Jewish dervish once made Jehovah command his people to rend their hearts, not their garments. A dervish as sincere had made Jehovah say he was disgusted with vain oblations, new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, and wanted no longer the combination of iniquity and the solemn assembly. But never once until the lawyer of Nazareth detected it, had any Jewish thinker recognized that the law itself was at fault and that the fault consisted in its attempts to impose righteousness from without.

Yet the lawyer of Nazareth had promised not to destroy the law. In so far as his attitude toward it was concerned, he kept his word. For his was always the Messianic attitude. Convinced that the entire mundane order of things would soon be swept away, he saw no object in hastening the downfall of any institution, whether religious or legal. He was coming back, within a very few years, to judge the world and reign. Meanwhile, with tireless, self-sacrificing, affectionate devotion, he was preparing men for the great and terrible day of the Lord by teaching them how to live. In its aim, his teaching was not revolutionary. It attacked no institution. It sought to found none. It was addressed solely to individuals.

In the heart of the individual, however, it worked such a revolution as had never been heard of before. Individuals saw the Nazarene break the Sabbath, heard him say that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. They saw him eat with unwashen hands, though the Pharisees called it a crime. They heard him say that a man was not defiled by the food that went into his mouth, but by the words that came out of his

mouth. They noticed that all his teachings emphasized, not externals, not observances, but the innermost righteousness of motive. He was the first to address conscience and conscience only, the first to declare that, if the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light. The philosophy of the law was summed up in three words—From without, in. This stranger announced a new philosophy, likewise summed up in three words—From within, out.

Marvellous was the result. Men who all their days had wandered, stumbling, in a labyrinth of dry legalism, suddenly found in him the way, the truth, and the life; for he told them that two brief commandments epitomized the whole of law, the whole of religion. One bade them love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind, and with all their strength. The other bade them love their neighbour as themselves.

To Jews in the First Century, A.D., this brought a shock—of amazement, first, and then of beauty. It was new. It was a revelation. And with it came that teaching of his about the new birth and

about religion as the life of God in the soul of man and about God as a power making for righteousness. No wonder they adored the Nazarene! In a sense as entirely human and natural as it is noble, he was their liberator, their redeemer.

XX

CHRISTIAN art would persuade us that the Nazarene never smiled. In all his portraits, he is grave —the man of sorrows acquainted with grief, the wanderer who had not where to lay his head. Even his biographers give that impression. Though we read that he wept, we are never told that he smiled.

Yet those same biographers describe his popularity, his success in healing, and the fascination he had for little children; whereas, children are not drawn to men who never smile, nor are healers depressed, nor can a joyless temperament win popularity. According to the account given us by his favourite pupil, he now and then spoke of the great joy that was in him. Joy wears a smile, and can laugh.

But laughter was frowned upon among the Jews of the First Century, A.D. They remembered too well the ancient pessimist who, though admitting

that there was a time to laugh, implied that the time would never come; in laughter he saw a kind of madness, and much preferred gloom. So we find in the Nazarene's biographers an effort, always, to hide his humour—an effort not invariably successful. Despite reticence and concealments on their part, the man himself shines through, and in one situation, at least, they unconsciously reveal him as not only possessing a keen sense of the absurd, but as possessing a genius for making shams and hypocrisies absurd.

He was preaching, at the time, and, in the course of his remarks, touched upon Pharisaism. He began, startlingly enough, by declaring that Pharisaism, far from demanding too much righteousness, demanded too little. Then, with the skill of an inspired satirist, he adopted the Pharisee's technique. They were piously building a fence around the law. Very well, he, too, would build a fence. When built, it would make them ridiculous.

This he proceeded to do without announcing his intention. Solemnly he quoted the ancients, in true Pharisee style, but, instead of picking out laws bearing upon ritual and observance and the thou-

sand and one grotesque niceties of spiritual dandyism, as they did, he picked out laws bearing upon morality. Still keeping to their own method, he built a fence around those.

We are not told that his hearers laughed. The biographer who reports him seems to have missed the point, himself, and there are readers who go on missing it even to-day. Yet what a master stroke of satire it was!

He quoted the ancient law against murder, and built a fence around it by saying that whoever was angry with his brother deserved punishment. He quoted the ancient law against adultery, and built a fence around it by saying that lust was adultery. He quoted the ancient divorce law, and built a fence around it by forbidding divorce save for one cause only. He quoted the ancient law against perjury, and built a fence around it by forbidding all oaths. He quoted the ancient law that bade men love their neighbours, and built a fence around that by commanding them to love even their enemies.

Grotesque enough the fence of the reactionaries looked, then, and grotesque enough the reactionaries looked!

All great satirists have been philosophers, and philosophers are noted for two very rare and splendid gifts. One of them is insight. The other is moderation. Insight enabled the Nazarene to perceive clearly that the whole thing wrong with Pharisaism and with ceremonialism and with Jewish legalism was its emphasis upon externals, its failure to deal with motive. Moderation enabled him to restrain his humour. We are free to surmise that the man who could ridicule so mercilessly the Pharisaic fence-builders saw innumerable absurdities in the law itself—especially when he read about the religious importance of beard-trimming or about the horrid impiety of wearing cloth in which wool mingled with linen. Nevertheless, he was careful to avoid attacking mere absurdities in the law. When he attacked it, it was because he had found something out and out vicious—for example, a statute that commanded men to hate their enemies.

He hated hate. He hated its sources. If a man had made an enemy, let him go to that enemy with all speed and bring matters to an agreement instead of waiting and allowing hate to grow. If the

interview failed to bring about an understanding, let him invite mediation; blessed are the peacemakers. If the peacemakers failed, let him submit to wrong. There must be no retaliation. When smitten on one cheek, let a man turn the other. When robbed of his coat, let him surrender his cloak also. When forced to go a mile, let him go two miles. Instead of hating his enemy, let him love his enemy and recompense evil with good. How else could a man be perfect even as his Father in heaven was perfect?

Everyone recognizes the idealism in such principles as these, but their practicality is still questioned, and there are those who wonder if the young rabbi of Nazareth lived up to them always, himself. He had enemies; each new onslaught of his upon Pharisaism added to their numbers, and the more bigoted among those enemies sought to lynch him. Is it credible that a young rabbi who denounced them in such vitriolic terms managed, nevertheless, to love them? It is not only credible, it is a fact.

They knew it. There were Pharisees who entertained him in their homes. At least one Pharisee

came to consult him. Many Pharisees joined the early church, and its chief leader, propagandist, and theologian had been brought up a Pharisee of the Pharisees at Tarsus. Men are not given to courting or consulting one who hates them during his lifetime or to following him after his death.

Generally even the extreme bigots soon recovered from their paroxysms of rage. We never read of any organized opposition to the movement the rabbi of Nazareth led or to any plot against him until the very end. Even then the Pharisees played an inconspicuous part—perhaps none. Of his four biographers, only one, the least authoritative, speaks of Pharisees in the gang that captured him. The others describe it as made up of priests, pedants, captains of the temple, and Roman legionaries; Pharisees are not mentioned.

Savage, undeniably, are the young rabbi's attacks on Pharisaism as we read them now. Were they as savage at the time, or offset, measurably, by the charm and sweetness of an endearing personality? We know how easy it is to tolerate reprimand that is given with a smile, how difficult it is to cherish resentment against the rebuking prophet

whose heart overflows with kindliness and whose days are crowded with good works. And there is something winning about fun when the point is legitimately taken and the fun-maker not too frigid or too prone to denounce the sinner along with the sin. It may well be that among the Pharisees who learned of the Nazarene's exploit in fence-building there were many who saw their own ridiculous fence for what it was—and laughed.

At any rate, he had once more made clear his conception of righteousness as an affair of the heart, once more enunciated the principle no moralist before him had grasped—From within, out. The Pharisees themselves, in their more reflective moments, could appreciate the naturalness, the reasonableness, the glowing friendliness of that. For the first time in their lives they listened to a Jew who recognized their inherent goodness, told them they were sons of God, and, instead of making righteousness deterrent because artificial, made it attractive because of its complete normality. Moreover, the righteousness he proclaimed was a new righteousness, at once idealistic and practical. Its adoption produced a new kind of man.

Many there were who rejected it, but those who followed the Nazarene and obeyed him came soon to discover that his doctrine—From within, out—worked an astonishing change within. Conscience became clearer. Motive grew stronger. Character broadened and deepened and ripened. In their efforts to explain the change, some spoke of a free gift—grace; others said it was like the supernatural building of a holy temple; still others declared that the very spirit of the Nazarene was being shaped within them. Not one asserted or so much as imagined that it was a change wrought by the Christian's own unaided effort. In those days you never heard of salvation by character, you heard of character by salvation. Religion was no longer a mere observance, morally or spiritually; it was the life of God in the soul of man, guiding, impelling, inspiring, and thereby wondrously transforming.

XXI

THERE are honest men, not a few, who think the Nazarene rabbi a dreamer. The beauty, the sweetness, the unrivalled idealism of his teachings they admire, but in much the same way that they admire a symphony or a poem. Both symphony and poem are good for the soul. Good for the soul, likewise, are visionary maxims, they assume—maxims which they say we ought all of us to obey, yet which, as they also tell us, no one can obey. Thus it comes about that moderns frequently regard certain of the young rabbi's teachings, not as maxims to be applied, but as a source of what they are pleased to call uplift.

It is difficult to see what uplift results from clearly perceiving an ideal and then pronouncing it no more applicable in the world of affairs than a symphony would be, or a lyric. The actual result is not uplift, it is mental confusion, moral groping, and an altogether false estimate

of the Nazarene as a well-intentioned young philosopher who had got in over his depth—for example, when he said we must love our enemies.

But observe. We are told to like them. Liking and loving are two different things. The test of liking is congeniality. The test of love is service. You can love without liking. To make this plain the man of Nazareth told a story about a Jew who was held up by bandits. They robbed him and mauled him and left him flat in the road more dead than alive, and there he lay until a stranger happened along on a donkey. The stranger had no liking for Jews. His ancestors, far back, had been converts to Judaism in the East when the Jews were captive there after the great deportation, and had followed the Jews to Palestine when the period of captivity was over. In Palestine the Jews had excommunicated them. Consequently, they had founded a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim, with a priesthood of their own and a ritual of their own, thus adding to racial and social antipathies a sect antipathy. After four hundred years, Jews had still no dealings with

Samaritans, or Samaritans with Jews. A Jew and a Samaritan were enemies at sight.

Nevertheless, when the Samaritan in the story saw the Jew the bandits had all but killed, he took him up, bandaged his wounds, carried him on his donkey to the nearest tavern, spent the night there nursing him, and in the morning paid his bill. Before leaving, he instructed the innkeeper to take care of him. It would cost something. Very well, let him charge it to the Samaritan.

There the story ends. We are not told that the Samaritan looked up the Jew later on and sought to make a friend of him. We are not told that he wanted to. We are left to assume that he disliked Jews as cordially after the episode as before it, but, using the word in the sense in which the Nazarene used it, how he had loved his enemy!

But many who think the Nazarene a dreamer dismiss his precept about loving one's enemies as a mere instance of oriental exaggeration, like his remark that faith could remove mountains. It was no such thing, though, by any interpretation, it would be a genial precept, whereas certain others,

though genial in motive, contain all the potentialities of mischief.

He taught his followers to make a virtue of indiscriminate giving and of indiscriminate lending. In practice, indiscriminate giving and indiscriminate lending are vices, not virtues, and they are so manifestly vices that the point is no longer discussed. We have got beyond pauperizing people. We are not going back to it. And once, when an excellent young man came to the Nazarene and asked how he could attain salvation, he was bidden to follow the Nazarene, but first to sell all he had and give to the poor. When the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful, for, as we read, he was one that had great possessions. In these days, young men of his stamp receive better advice.

It was a pupil of his, and not the Nazarene, who denounced the love of money as a root of all kinds of evil; yet it was the Nazarene himself who warned his hearers against the deceitfulness of riches, and who said that a camel could go through a needle's eye more easily than a rich man could enter into the Kingdom of God, and who even

forbade thrift. There was to be no laying up of treasure. There was to be no provision against the morrow. Food, wine, clothing—why worry about them? The birds were not worrying about the morrow's food. The lilies, though more gloriously arrayed than any monarch, were not worrying about the morrow's clothes, nor were they working. God fed the birds to-day and would feed them to-morrow. God clothed the lilies to-day and would clothe them to-morrow. The only thing one ought to worry about was how to enter into the Kingdom of God and seek his righteousness. Then food, wine and clothing would all be provided. Let the morrow worry about itself. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

What shall we say of this? That the young rabbi was without responsibilities, himself, and without practical experience, and therefore without ordinary good sense in business matters? Thirty years of his life are virtually blank. For all we know, his employment as a carpenter may have taught him much, and certainly he understood banking. A fable he once used by the way of illustration tells how a rich man, having left money in

the keeping of his subordinates, was indignant when he returned and found that one of them had hoarded the money instead of putting it out at interest.

Or are we to assume that in his praise of heedless giving, his condemnation of wealth, and his worship of improvidence, he was thinking in italics, speaking in capitals, and saying vastly more than he meant? That assumption is as untenable as the other. Now and then, to be sure, he could overstate for emphasis; it was a matter of circumstances and the mood and the kind of listeners he had. But these exaltations of unscientific charity and of complete indifference to money and its entailed responsibilities occur in sermons, in parables, and in talks with individuals; a wide variety of circumstance attends them, a wide variety of mood. Yet they are always the same. He was in earnest.

Modern readers feel that he was, and this, chiefly, is why they think him a dreamer. They say he preaches economic folly—that to obey him would be to bring ruin, not only upon oneself, but upon one's dependents as well, and to force others to perform the obligations one has shirked. From

that they go on to say that a preacher of economic folly betrays a shallowness that unfits him to be an authoritative guide in any realm of conduct whatsoever. They will come to him for uplift, so called. They will admire the beauty, the sweetness, the unrivalled idealism of his teachings, but only as they admire a symphony or a poem. They will sentimentalize over him. They will perhaps even believe—or half believe—the innumerable strange theories metaphysicians have excogitated regarding him ever since his death. But obey him—no. He was too visionary, they think.

Well, what else can we expect? Theologians, in their determination to prove him a god, systematically obscure his belief in his second coming, though it was his central idea. Not one of those maxims of his about property need concern us for a moment. He was not thinking of us when he spoke. He intended those maxims about property for Galilean yokels and villagers of the First Century, A.D., and for them alone. How could they apply to our Twentieth-Century civilization? There was to be no Twentieth-Century civilization. There was to be no Twentieth Century.

Early in the Second Century, A.D., at latest, the world itself would dissolve and the Kingdom of God be proclaimed, with the Messiah as its ever-living sovereign. If his maxims about property were unpractical, what matter? Nothing mattered, with the end of all things so near—nothing, that is, except the one tremendous issue. Judgment was at hand. If anxieties over money endangered men's immortal souls, then away with anxieties about money. If beggars whined at one's elbow, what virtue in denying them alms? They might be in want—decently so. But, even if they were frauds, one would not be breeding hordes of pauperized and predatory humbugs; the time was too short; and in any case there remained the generosity of a good deed.

Theology has gained nothing by making the young rabbi of Nazareth a god. It has lost much by denying that he expected soon to come again. Falsifying the man has falsified his teachings also, and provided an easy way out for those who would escape the duties laid upon them by the supreme moralist and prophet whom, of right, we call master.

XXII

ONE essential of greatness—its prime essential, we might almost say—is littleness. When his pupils asked which of them was to be greatest, the Nazarene took a little boy and set him by his side, and told them that the pupil who would be least of all should be greatest.

It is true that the Nazarene could speak of himself as greater than the old Jewish sages and as the Messiah foretold in prophecy. Yet, by comparison with what has come of them, how little were his thoughts! His world was little, and destined soon to perish. His mission was little, and designed to affect only the men of his day and of a brief time thereafter. His church, as he now and then called it, was a mere unorganized group within the Jewish church. Even his philosophy of morals was limited. He was not reconstructing society. He taught a personal religion, a personal morality. There he stopped.

Those who picture him as planning a new social order find no warrant for that assumption in any of his recorded utterances, loudly though the world in his day cried out for a new social order. He saw slaves toiling in Galilean vineyards, but never attacked slavery. He saw Roman legionaries swaggering in Jerusalem, but never sought to abolish militarism. On coins he saw the likeness of a foreign despot, but he never denounced imperialism. And yet, in spite of his failure to deal with flagrant national and international abuses, he was a world reformer such as the world had never beheld before and such as it has never beheld since.

For society is an abstraction. What exists concretely is people. Reconstruct people, and lo, you have reconstructed society! Without realizing it, the man from Nazareth was abolishing slavery, shaming militarism, dissolving empires, and creating a new heaven and a new earth.

Centuries had to go by before Christianity produced anywhere the type of character that could put an end to slavery. No sooner had the Nazarene found martyrdom than theology began to imply that the reconstruction of character was un-

important, relatively, and the acceptance of correct metaphysical theories about him the supreme duty of man. When at last Christianity did produce here and there the type of character that could put an end to slavery, theologians had already argued that, inasmuch as all scripture was miraculously inspired, an unimpeachable authority attached to the old Jewish classics. There slavery was not only allowed, it was specifically commanded by Jehovah himself.

The old-time Jewish saints had slaves; Abraham owned upwards of three hundred. Priests bought souls with money—those are the words. Cruelty to slaves was so common as to necessitate a law against knocking out maidservants' eyes. Ordinarily, Jews bought their slaves from foreigners; Solomon's slaves—he had a drove of them—were Hittites, Amorites, and such, but frequently Jews owned Jews.

Jehovah was not entirely callous. This spectacle of Jews owning Jews displeased him, and he had Jeremiah announce that every man was to let his manservant and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free—none

was to serve himself of them—to wit, of a Jew his brother. Once every fifty years, all slaves were set free. Jehovah so decreed. But thereupon the enslavement of human beings began anew, and slavery as an institution remained as before. As an institution it had been divinely ordained. To question its inherent rightness would have amounted to impiety.

But it was not for this reason that the young rabbi let the institution of slavery alone. He let all institutions alone. All were doomed to pass away speedily, along with the earth itself. And yet he taught that men were sons of God. Sons of God aware of their sonship, aware of its implication, and prizing the reconstruction of character above allegiance to dogma, do not keep other sons of God in slavery or permit them to be kept in slavery. The world-wide liberation of slaves from physical bondage presupposed a liberation of mankind from mental bondage. It has been a poor liberation—this of the mind. It is still in its beginnings. But, nevertheless, it was sufficient to crush an evil as old, almost, as the race.

The Collectivists tell us that chattel slavery has

vanished only to be replaced by wage slavery—a rash assertion, but not without effect. In virtually the entire realm of industry there prevails an atmosphere surcharged with resentment. Whereas, a single maxim of the Nazarene's, when taken at face value by employed and employer alike, will end all resentment by removing its cause on both sides. He said, and meant it, that whatever a man would have others do to him the man must do to others. Every one knows that the Nazarene said this. Every one knows that he meant it. But, before it can find its application in industry, a great deal of laborious theological thinking will have to be laboriously unthought.

By denying his belief in his own second coming, and then bidding us suppose that he intended his ideas about property to be accepted as sound business principles to-day, theologians have convinced employers that he was a dreamily unpractical enthusiast bereft of all shrewdness. By denying his belief in his own second coming—a speedy second coming, be it remembered—theologians have misinterpreted his emphasis upon other-worldliness. The mechanic, or labourer, consequently, imagines

that to-day he would have the poor and distressed fix their thoughts on the bliss that awaits them in the other world and put up with poverty and distress meekly in this world. Here and there an employer imagines so. One such employer, when asked for a solution of the Labour problem, recommended Bibles and beer. Others have prescribed revivals. Labour is aware of this, and the advent of a certain uproariously popular evangelist arouses everywhere the suspicion that he had been called in as a preventive of strikes.

The Nazarene taught meekness, it is true, but meekness for all. He invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him and find rest, but he invited all the weary and heavy laden, not those of the labouring class alone. He had nothing whatever to say about the Labour problem. He foresaw neither the modern industrial conflict nor the possibility of the modern industrial conflict. And yet, he showed us the way out. More and more employers and employed every year are availing themselves of it. There is no other.

But conflicts between nations—what of those? Ten million boys perished, not long ago, in a war

waged by nominally Christian nations. Carrying Bibles and prayerbooks, they went out to kill. Chaplains attended them. Crosses—mute symbols of a very different death—now mark their graves. All through the mission fields the news of it has gone, and no more Christianity is wanted there.

Theologians, in their unwillingness to admit that the Nazarene believed he was coming again and in their insistence that he was a god, imply that he foresaw this. If so, why did he never condemn war, and why did his remarks about peace and blessedness of peacemaking relate solely to peace between individuals, and why, in his only mention of war—the bloodshed that was to occur shortly before his second coming—did he never hint that war was needless?

The man himself has explained why. All wars were soon to stop—the world was. And yet he has told us how to abolish war. He forbade arrogance. He forbade covetousness. He forbade malicious misrepresentation. He forbade hate. He forbade violence. He forbade retaliation. He commanded men to love their enemies. He was dealing only with individuals; granted; but nations are com-

posed of individuals—and of nothing else. Reconstruct individuals and you have reconstructed nations.

We are told that it is governments, and foreign offices more particularly, that make wars. It is. But every nation has the government it deserves. It deserves that government because its people tolerate that government. Reconstruct people, and in the end you reconstruct governments.

The mission fields are altogether wrong when they say that Christian nations allowed the catastrophe of 1914. There were no Christian nations involved. Instead there were nations persuaded by theorists and metaphysicians into imagining that they could follow the Nazarene without obeying him. It is strange that the mission fields ever thought the so-called Christian nations were Christian. Those nations own the mission fields—or to a vast extent they do. How did they get them? Thou shalt not steal.

When the Nazarene saw Roman legionaries swaggering in the city of David and a Roman viceroy enthroned there, imperialism was a crude sort of thing, frankly brutal—easy to denounce, accord-

ingly, as it had as yet no sophistical defence. No Roman viceroy said he was there for the good of the Jewish people. When Romans stole countries peopled with dark-skinned natives, nobody in Rome called it taking up the white man's burden. Times have changed since then. It is no longer easy to denounce imperialism, though the victims of imperialism are beginning to help us a little. Within a century or two—perhaps less—they may help us by force, successfully. Stranger things have happened. Meanwhile there emerges now and then the type of Christian who asks, gropingly, if there are not more Christian ways of taking up the white man's burden than by breaking a commandment the Nazarene himself indorsed and proclaimed and told his followers to obey.

Such gropings are dangerous. They are unpopular. They are revolutionary. But so are all gropings toward the man of Nazareth and his truth. His truth leads to the reconstruction of character, and the reconstruction of character in the individual leads to a reconstruction of character in the nation. No nation, once consenting to obey the Nazarene, instead of trusting to the

magical efficacy of accepting sham theories about him, will rob other nations of their birthright.

Neither will any nation then oppress any class of its own people. The change may come about through the Christianization of existing systems. It may require the destruction of all existing systems. But come it will. And to say confidently that it will come is a different thing, quite, from predicting a Utopia. The Utopias have invariably been schemes for reconstructing society without first reconstructing individuals. The Nazarene went at it the other way about. He was unaware that he had gone at it at all. But then, the measure of greatness lies, not in what it is consciously, the measure of greatness lies in what it is unconsciously. If his thoughts were little, they were germinal. One word gives the secret of humanity's complete rehabilitation. It is a word of two syllables—obey.

And so we are able to name very clearly, though without theological prepossession and without denying that many hundreds of years may have to go by before our assertion is justified, the relation between the young rabbi of Nazareth and the world. He was its saviour.

XXIII

NEVER having heard that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, the Nazarene believed in conscious immortality. Except for a single wealthy denomination among them, all the Jews of his time did. No more than the man himself had they heard that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God.

According to a majority of their ancient sages, death was an eternal sleep, if not exactly extinction. A man was like the beasts that perish. He went down to his fathers, who would never again see the light. The living knew that they must die; the dead knew nothing; as well their love as their hatred and their envy was at an end. As a cloud vanished, so vanished the dead.

You can read the collection of old Jewish classics seven eighths of the way through before coming to any definite intimation that consciousness survives death. Even then, immortality is

seldom mentioned, perhaps because the writers recalled that Jehovah abhorred it. In a famous story—the one about the first people and the crime they committed when, by eating forbidden fruit, they acquired conscience—we are told that Jehovah expelled them from the garden lest they might eat the fruit of the tree of life and live for ever.

This story made a deep and lasting impression. Until the great deportation, which brought Jews into contact with Babylonians and with the Babylonian faith in immortality, no Jew dared to think that Jehovah would permit consciousness to survive death. Salvation was salvation in this world only—salvation from enemies, from poverty, from disease. The other world held neither reward nor retribution. Heaven—the solid sky called a firmament—was the abode of Jehovah, the angels, and Satan. No human soul had ever reached it except Elijah's and perhaps Enoch's. But Enoch had not died, and Elijah had ascended into heaven, alive. And, in the theological sense of the word, there was no hell. The orthodox Jewish hell was a place under the ground where the dead slept in

comfort with their fathers, and were much annoyed when a spiritualist woke them up.

From the orthodox Jewish tirades against spiritualism, we learn that the occult fascinated the Jewish popular mind. Jews loved mediums—witches, wizards, sorcerers, and adepts controlled by familiar spirits abound in the chronicles. We learn of occultists who could read minds at a distance and of occultists who could project their spirits out of their bodies. Even prophets dabbled in these arts. Elisha, in Palestine, knew what the king of Samaria was saying in his bedroom. Ezekiel, leaving his body in Babylon, revisited Palestine. But of all the occultists, those most valued were the materializing mediums. There was one at Endor, and the first of the Jewish kings went to see her. By way of testing her powers, he asked her to bring him up Samuel. Out of the earth came an old man covered with a robe, and the king knew that it was Samuel, and bowed low. Samuel, however, showed irritation. Why, he demanded, had the medium disquieted him?

Along with spiritualism went another belief; souls that had just left the body could be summoned

back into it. We read that Elijah stretched himself upon the body of a dead child, and the child lived again; also that when a corpse was thrown into Elisha's tomb and touched his bones, it stood up alive.

But while the ancient Jews believed that mediums could awaken the dead and that a prophet could recall to life those who had just died, there was no belief in a general resurrection or in conscious immortality until alien influence introduced it. Then, though slowly at first, it spread. During the long period between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the New, belief in a general resurrection and in conscious immortality became orthodox. Only the Sadducees rejected it. Talking with orthodox Jews, the young rabbi of Nazareth took their belief for granted, and on the one occasion when he advanced an argument for immortality he was talking with Sadducees. It was hardly an argument, then; rather it was an assertion.

A biographer of his—the pupil whose narrative comes last in the series preserved for us—gives the impression that he spoke of eternal life constantly.

The others give the impression that he spoke of it only rarely. A follower of his in a letter to converts at Rome, glories in the faith that robs death of its sting and the grave of its victory. The man himself never so described it. Though he walked steadily toward martyrdom, determined to seek it, determined to find it, and though he dreaded the pain, he never feared death.

To him, faith in the indestructibility of spirit was important, not because it enabled a man to face with fortitude the momentary—and in most cases the unconscious—plunge into a new existence, but because faith in the indestructibility of spirit enabled a man to comprehend in some measure the incalculable importance of righteousness. Upon righteousness depended eternal life. Righteousness was the condition, eternal life the reward. Righteousness was the only condition. There could be no substitute. Worship would not serve, correct metaphysical theories would not. In the Last Judgment the angels were to bring all nations before him. Millions would come who, because they never heard of him, had neither worshipped him nor held correct metaphysical theories about

him. For them, as for others, the test was righteousness. If they had obeyed the principle set forth in his teachings, then they, too, were to inherit eternal life.

Considering the definiteness with which the man of Nazareth made immortality the incentive to obedience, it still seems to certain minds very strange that he should have left us no argument to strengthen our faith in immortality. Such minds want immortality proved. Whereas only things present and things past can be proved, and whereas the Nazarene never once sought to prove things. It was not his way. When he answered the Sadducees by quoting the Scriptures, he knew that in the same Scriptures conscious immortality was denied over and over again and that there were sentences denying all immortality. But if the quotation proved nothing, it suggested much. And his doctrine of the divine fatherhood suggests more. Whoever will believe in the divine fatherhood must of necessity come to disbelieve in death.

Does a father develop in his children the attachments he himself intends to shatter? The greatest thing in the world is love. The thing

most divine in man is love, for God is love. Is it conceivable that the God who is our father binds us to friends and kindred with ties of affection he means to break, as if with his own hand, so that all that we know to be finest and tenderest and noblest in us he rewards with irretrievable disappointment and defeat? No man, once he has thought of God as his father, can believe that such is God's plan.

Then, too, the Nazarene taught that religion was nothing less than the life of God in the soul of man; he taught that God was a power making for righteousness; he taught that therefore men could be perfect, even as God was perfect. He commanded them to be perfect, and no serious student of his philosophy will attempt to explain away the command. But given the command and given a devout eagerness to obey it, what do followers of the Nazarene discover? Invariably they perceive that no lifetime, even of fourscore years and ten, was ever long enough for the realization of so lofty an ideal.

Shall we conclude, then, that the life of God in the soul of man consents at last to achieve only a

partial triumph? Must we tell ourselves that the power making for righteousness cannot wholly succeed? He who denies the life beyond death, with opportunity beyond death, and moral effort beyond death, and moral victory beyond death, must believe that God's own ambition for his children ends in failure.

Quite without suspecting that we moderns were ever to exist, the Nazarene bequeathed to us a faith in the divine fatherhood that necessitates a faith in the life beyond death—a conscious life, a life eternal, a life triumphant, a life in which the Nazarene's obedient followers enter into the joy of their Lord.

XXIV

PEARLY gates, golden streets, with angels and harps and never-ending canticles—such is the idea of heaven we moderns say we have swept from our minds. Yet the impression it made remains, and now and then the idea itself recurs. Christian art brings it vividly before the imagination. So do hymns circumstantially describing heaven and set to beautiful music. Even common talk calls it back—we speak of another world, a better land. From time to time we reopen the strangest of early Christian books, and lo! there are the pearly gates, the streets of pure gold; there are the foundations of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst, just as theologians have said. A single passage reveals them all.

Other passages tell us that the saints wear white robes and play upon harps and sing among angels. The heaven of the strange book was a Fra Angelico heaven. It became the orthodox heaven. It is

still the heaven of little children, many of whom never outgrow it. Supposing it to be the heaven of the Nazarene—for centuries theologians assumed that it was—multitudes have seen in it an important, if not an all-sufficing, reason for scorning the Nazarene.

But this strange little book that tells so much about heaven—what is it? It purports to be a prophecy. In reality it is an imitation prophecy —Ezekiel re-written by an early Christian mystic. Like its model, it recounts visions, curses Babylon, denounces a great harlot, pictures extraordinary animals, and speaks of the writer's measuring the temple with a rod. Like its model, it is a work of creative fancy.

There the resemblance ends. The imitation prophecy far excels its model in literary beauty, and now and then attains a splendour unsurpassed elsewhere, while some of its nobler sentences reach the very summit of spirituality. There is an irresistible appeal in it, moreover—a sweetness and a tenderness that win the heart. So it is with reluctance that the reader cross-questions its assertion, though one cross-questions readily enough the

theologians' many astonishing guesses as to their meaning.

Why, for example, did they tell us that the abhorred scarlet woman symbolized clearly and definitely the Roman Catholic Church? The writer had never heard of such a thing as the Roman Catholic Church. And why did they assure us that, when he wrote of pearly gates, golden streets, and foundations of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst, he was describing heaven? He himself thought not. In that very passage he said plainly that he was describing a new Jerusalem and that he saw it descend out of heaven. The new Jerusalem, not heaven, had pearly gates. The new Jerusalem, not heaven, had golden streets. The new Jerusalem, not heaven, had foundations of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst.

The writer, so his book declares, was the Nazarene's favourite pupil. Many doubt that he wrote a biography of the Nazarene, but, granting that he did, it is interesting to note that, although he puts ideas of his own into his master's mouth, making him imply that he lived in heaven before he came to the earth, and reporting a long and very

intimate talk in which the master is said to have nentioned heaven, hardly anything about heaven is disclosed. There are many mansions in his father's house. He is going there. While there he will make ready a place for his followers. Beyond these vague intimations, he tells nothing. There is not a word about pearly gates, or about golden streets, or about foundations of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst.

Theologians much less bound over by conscience to the Nazarene's own views than was the biographer have left us a considerable mass of documents. Some of these theologians had been pupils of the Nazarene. The others had studied under his pupils. All were at liberty to report whatever he had said about heaven and at liberty, in a degree, to add inferential elaborations of their own. Not one of them describes pearly gates. Not one of them mentions golden streets. Not one of them speaks of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst foundations. Only the mystic who rewrote Ezekiel, thus giving us the book we call the Apocalypse, or Revelation, assumed to know about those.

It is clear, however, that the Nazarene thought of heaven as a place, and that the place was somewhere in the general direction we call *up*. He was a Jew. He inherited Jewish ideas. To him, the earth was little, and flat, and square, and not very thick. Beneath it was water. Above it arched a great dome. If heaven was a place, then heaven was somewhere above the dome. Yet he showed a remarkable vagueness in this as in other matters related to the physical realization of his philosophy. That Messianic Kingdom—where, precisely, was it to be? He never said. His advent in the sky—how were all nations to behold him at once? The physical impossibility of it disturbed him not in the least. He never troubled himself to think the thing out, nor did his followers attempt to, nor would any Jew of the First Century, A. D., have attempted to.

For hundreds of years the Jews had believed that up above the solid sky dwelt Jehovah and his angels. Old legends said Jehovah had frequently descended thence, and even in the First Century, A. D., angels were supposed to be going back and forth between heaven and earth. According to

one legend a mortal had entered heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by flaming steeds. But where was the door through which Jehovah and the angels and the man with his fiery chariot had all passed? No one knew. No one sought to find out.

Blandly indulgent was the Jewish imagination in its treatment of half-finished descriptions and half-told tales. Legend would say dead men came to life and failed to mention their revealing anything about the heaven they had visited. The failure made no impression. But the Jewish imagination was not alone in its unwillingness to rationalize its idea of heaven and bring it to completion. There was a Greek heaven. There was a Norse heaven. There were Celtic heavens. Olympus, Asgard, Hy Brasil, and Avilon lent themselves no more satisfactorily to rationalization than did the Jewish heaven, but the kind of man who could object to illogical heavens had not yet made his appearance anywhere.

We have outgrown the Nazarene's idea of heaven—or assert that we have. In our thinking, if not in our fancying, we no longer regard heaven

as a place. It might almost be said that we forget heaven. Few moderns are conscious of doing right in order to reach heaven, though an eternity in heaven was the reward the young rabbi of Nazareth offered, and the sayings in which he offered it are quoted so constantly that, in the popular mind, he is a Nazarene winning converts by bribery. Whereas the motive he addressed most commonly and most effectively was not self-interest, it was the desire in men to rise above self-interest. He would tell a fisherman to drop his trade and follow him, and, even in making the demand, say nothing about eternal life. The reward he offered the fisherman was an opportunity to become a fisher of men. He could tell a young plutocrat to give away all his money, and, in making even that demand, say nothing about eternal life. The reward he offered the young plutocrat was an opportunity to become perfect. And in the numberless confessions handed down to us by his converts the whole preponderance of testimony goes to show that the reward they valued supremely was not the reward they were to receive in heaven but the reward which they had already received and which

made them worthy of heaven. The majority seldom speak of heaven. About worthiness they speak constantly.

This, perhaps, is why their minds remained so incurious regarding heaven. Concerning the place to which they were going and to which their master had long since gone they asked no questions. Why be inquisitive about the place? Why seek details? Here, in this present world, a phenomenon of astounding novelty and importance dazzled them by its increasing frequency—men were becoming worthy. About that, they talked and wrote perpetually. About that they were curious—overcurious, even. About that they philosophized and theologized until they lost their way in the maze of speculation which was to serve as a pleasure-resort for religiously inclined metaphysicians ever after.

It is significant that, in all their endlessly elaborate theorizings, the Nazarene's immediate followers were never tempted to theorize concerning heaven. Like their master, and like those who obediently follow him to-day, they were interested primarily in the reconstruction of character. Far

more wonderful than pearly gates, golden streets, and foundations of jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and amethyst was the heaven within their own souls. It was a new heaven. It was a heaven no one had ever dreamed of before the Nazarene made it real. And it was a heaven without end.

XXV

ETERNAL damnation, so the rabbi of Nazareth declared, awaited all who disobeyed him. He said that when he returned in glory to judge the world, he would send them away into outer darkness. There was to be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Hell, he taught, was a furnace of fire. The fire was unquenchable, escape from it impossible.

He told a story about a rich man and a beggar. Both died. The rich man went to hell, the beggar to heaven. From the place of torment the rich man could see heaven, where the beggar lay in Abraham's bosom. The rich man cried out to him for water, saying he was in anguish among the flames. The beggar replied that no water could be sent. Between heaven and hell there was a great gulf fixed; none might cross over.

Repeatedly the Nazarene spoke of hell. His recorded descriptions agree; the wicked passed

through outer darkness to suffer eternally in a hell of fire; their torments were physical torments plus mental torments.

For a long time theologians in general believed that the young rabbi meant what he said, and quite obviously he did. There is nowhere the slightest evidence that he intended his descriptions to be taken figuratively. Nowhere is there evidence that his hearers took them figuratively. A follower of his mentions punishment and eternal fire. Another mentions a lake burning with fire and brimstone. Not one of the writers who reflect early Christian thought ever attempted to show that eternal damnation in a hell of fire meant anything but eternal damnation in a hell of fire.

Spiritual terrorists still preach hell, a hell of fire, an eternal hell. Millions of believers, the world over, still quake at the thought of it, and permit the thought of it to darken their lives and give them a hideous idea of God. Their God is our devil, with this difference: they take their hideous God seriously, while none of us any longer takes the devil seriously.

Other millions, when told of a God who roasted

sinners eternally in a blazing furnace, have spurned God. No single dogma has bred vaster multitudes of unbelievers. Whereas, the Nazarene never said that God would send the wicked to hell. He said that he himself would. Just this distinction, had it been observed, would have altered the whole trend of theology, spared the victims of spiritual terrorists incalculable misery, and prevented many an honest man from repudiating all faith. But theology has cared little for what the Nazarene said about himself; it has assumed that it knew better.

Nevertheless, even theologians here and there soon began to wonder if perhaps the dogma was not somehow a mistake. Less than two centuries after the young rabbi's martyrdom, there were full-fledged Universalists. But Saint Augustine hastened to the defense of eternal damnation, and hundreds of years went by before it was again assailed from within the church.

The churchmen who attacked it have all believed in the reality of future punishment but sought to prove that the Nazarene meant something very different from what he said. One type

of remonstrant has contended that, while a hell of fire might exist, it would in course of time consume the wicked altogether. Another type of remonstrant has contended that a hell of fire would in course of time reform them; Elhaman Winchester, of Philadelphia, calculated that it would take about forty-four thousand years. A third type of remonstrant has contended that the hell of fire meant only a hell of remorse, which might last for ever and might not. Restorationists—our modern Universalists and those who agree with them—think of hell as a state of mental torment from which all will eventually be saved. Every one of these types daringly disregards the Nazarene's own teachings. In unmistakable straight terms he described a physical and an eternal hell from which there was no escape.

However, it was a hell for the wicked only. Mere theological offenders were in no danger of hell-fire. No one was to be sent there for not believing that the young rabbi was a god; he himself never believed that he was a god. No one was to be sent there for not believing in the Trinity; he himself had never heard of the Trinity. No one

was to be sent there for not believing in the Atonement; Abraham, who had died centuries before anybody on earth believed in the Atonement, was in heaven.

Time out of mind spiritual terrorists have used hell as a device for scaring people into orthodoxy. The Nazarene used it as a device for scaring them into righteousness. They were not to obey him from fear alone. They were to obey him from the highest motives as well. But, believing that an eternal hell of fire was a reality, and that into that eternal hell of fire the wicked would be cast, he could make no secret of it, for he himself was to be the judge.

Nothing in the whole account of the Nazarene rabbi is so astounding as his calm, unwavering, unquestioning conviction that soon he would have to send people to hell. Such a rôle was monstrous, inherently, and at all points out of keeping with his character. He loved to go about healing the sick. He forgave men their sins. He was compassionate. Even while being executed, he begged his father in heaven to forgive his executioners. Why, then, did he permit himself to fancy that he

must become the terrible judge who would institute eternal damnation?

No such inhumanity was implied by the prophetic writings about the Messiah. They described the Messiah as a judge, but not as a brutal judge imposing penalties far exceeding the cruelest even Jehovah had imposed. On the smallest provocation, Jehovah would slay you; but there the thing ended; you were not punished eternally in a furnace of fire. Whence came the gentle Nazarene's idea that this rôle was assigned to him?

The answer brings us very close to the real man. He had a cousin, a Jew of about his own age, and this cousin turned prophet, reviving the spectacular uncouthness of the old Hebrew dervishes. Huge was the impression he made. Crowds swarmed out to the river bank where he preached. Converts let him dip them in the river. It was a new rite, symbolizing moral purification, and one day the Nazarene, then only a private scholar supporting himself by working at the carpenter's bench, went to his cousin to receive baptism. The Baptist at first protested, saying that the Nazarene ought instead to baptize him, for in all his

speeches the Baptist had predicted that a man far greater than himself would come; behold, here was the man! Nevertheless, the ceremony proceeded.

There were reasons why it should. The Nazarene believed implicitly in his cousin's greatness. No greater man had ever lived, he said. Also, he believed in Elijah, that prince of wonder-workers, who had ended his career by riding to heaven in a chariot of fire. The Nazarene believed that his cousin was Elijah reincarnated. Still again, he believed that a phrase written by one of the prophets centuries before described his cousin. For these reasons he felt sure that his cousin had a right to baptize him.

But that was not all. The same reasons convinced the Nazarene that whatever his cousin said must be true, and his cousin said that the greater man who should come after him and with whom he identified the young scholar and carpenter, would cast the wicked into unquenchable fire.

However, there are degrees of conviction. A belief alien to a man's nature and imposed from

without is rarely assimilated. The young rabbi could abide the thought of having at some future day to cast the wicked into unquenchable fire. He could use the idea for alarmist purposes and terrorize into obedience those who resisted all other appeals. He could even declare that certain stubbornly unrepentant cities—Chorazin and Bethsaida—would suffer a punishment worse than Tyre's or Sodom's. But it was easy to say he would bring doom upon cities—cities are vague. It was easy to say he would deal harshly with the wicked in general at some future day—the wicked in general are vague and the future is vague. Confronted with individuals face to face, the Nazarene wavered. Even when dealing with a scoffer face to face he never told the scoffer that an eternity in a furnace of fire would be his punishment for scoffing. Dealing with individuals he had not the heart to think of hell-fire.

It is true that the Nazarene's belief in eternal fiery damnation was the mainspring of his zeal. He felt that he must hasten on along the country roads warning every man he met. In towns and villages he gathered crowds and warned them.

He sent out his pupils to spread the alarm. Once he sent out seventy mendicant friars to spread it. Yet his belief never went deep enough to affect his character. Second-hand beliefs rarely do go deep enough to affect character. The Nazarene's sweetness, his gentleness, his compassion, and his wonderful buoyancy—his joy, as he called it—remained unchanged. There was nothing grim about him—nothing prefiguring the rôle of cruelty his cousin had thrust upon him.

A strange credulity he may seem to have shown in allowing his cousin to dominate his thought at all. But others—throngs of them—were as impressed by his cousin. The man in weird toggery, out there by the river, took Palestine by storm. Even priests and Levites travelled from Jerusalem to hear him. He was the reigning sensation.

As strange, almost, seem the Nazarene's reasons for believing that whatever his cousin said must be true. Nothing recorded about the Baptist marks him as especially great. Had he been really a reincarnation of Elijah, it by no means followed that his ideas regarding unquenchable

fire were necessarily sound. As for the phrase quoted from an old-time prophet, it mentioned a voice of one crying in the wilderness, and anybody's voice crying in any wilderness at any time would have fulfilled it, granted only that the voice said the things that were written in the prophecy. From our modern viewpoint, we fail to see why the Nazarene's cousin, by reading the things written in the prophecy and then crying them out in a wilderness, proved himself to be the very man the old-time prophet had in mind.

But the modern viewpoint was wholly absent from the Jewish world of the First Century, A. D. When we assert that the Nazarene rabbi argued fallaciously, we are merely asserting that, on his scholarly side, he was a First-Century Jew. In matters of scholarship, all First-Century Jews argued fallaciously. It was the way.

So, instead of excusing the young rabbi's threats of eternal damnation by denying that he meant what he said, we may do the logical thing and declare that he had a great deal too much faith in his cousin. As no one has ever made John the Baptist a god, we may without irreverence go

further, and instead of thinking out ways of escape from his hell-fire, content ourselves by recognizing that he was unworthy to unloose the latchet of the Nazarene's shoes and quite mistaken about hell.

XXVI

THE most revered image ever fashioned by devoted hands represents a living man spiked to a cross, and after all these centuries it still evokes gratitude and adoration. What does the image mean?

Theology replies by quoting a sentence from a narrative written by the victim's favourite pupil. He was a mystic. He was a theologian. He was by nature a poet. But like other mystics, other theologians, and other poets, he lacked now and then the realistic sense, and in matters so vitally interesting to mankind the realistic sense is important.

What have we—definitely—in his interpretation of the Nazarene's tragic death? He says that it represented God's love for the world. He says that God had an only-begotten son, implying that only the Nazarene was a son of God. He says that God gave his son, implying that his son's fate was

predestined and inevitable, not a martyrdom freely sought. He says that those who believe in God's son shall not perish but have eternal life.

All this is said so devoutly that it slips into the mind unprotested, yet it will be found to differ in certain very notable respects from the teachings of the man himself. According to the man himself, obedience, not belief, was the price of eternal life. According to the man himself, all men were sons of God. According to the man himself he walked freely to his death. According to the man himself, his death represented, not God's love for the world, but his own love for the world.

Because of its dramatic appeal and its grip upon emotion, the Nazarene's death and its interpretation quite overshadow his life and its interpretation in the minds of believers. This was so from the first. Even his pupils, though for three years they had been close to the living man, watching his benevolent career as a healer, witnessing his endeavours to reconstruct character, listening to his instructions regarding conduct, became so hypnotized by the supposed mystery of his death that, in reading their sermons and letters, we get

the impression that they thought of him less as a man who had lived than as a god who had died.

Yet he himself rarely spoke of his approaching death. He said little by way of interpreting it. To him, the great outstanding futurity, far more impressive, was his second coming. It is to his followers, and not to the man himself, that we owe the long-drawn, laboured, metaphysical explanations of his end. It is to his followers, and not to the man himself, that we owe the announcement that men, by believing that he suffered in their stead, could escape the consequence of sin.

Among his early followers, who were Jews, there developed soon after his martyrdom a theory that he had been a kind of sacrificial victim, slaughtered on a hill-top as bulls, heifers, rams, and sheep were still being slaughtered in the temple. In advancing this view, one of those early followers actually says that the Nazarene was a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell. Those are the words. To First-Century Jewish Christians they were not offensive, and there are theologians even to-day who teach that Jehovah

instituted the Jewish sacrificial system for the special purpose of preparing men's minds to understand the death of a young rabbi hundreds of years later.

But an understanding of the Jewish sacrificial system weakens the analogy. When you led a bull to the temple and gave it to the priests you lost the bull. It was a kind of penance. If, after the priests had eaten part of the bull and burned the rest, you felt that you had induced Jehovah to overlook your sins, it was not only because the bull had suffered for them, but also and more particularly because you had suffered for them. In the death of the young rabbi, the young rabbi alone suffered.

Innumerable honest men have repudiated Christianity because they could not see that one man's death atoned for another man's sins. They had little respect for a God who could tolerate such an arrangement, still less for a God in whose conscience such an arrangement could originate. The entire theological plan of salvation seemed to them immoral, and when they were told that God admired men for believing in an

immoral plan of salvation, and gave them eternal life for believing, they rebelled.

Then, too, many an honest man has seen in the theological plan of salvation a vast futility. How could a single victim, by merely suffering a few hours, atone for the sins of countless millions?

Even those who believed in the theological plan of salvation have had their periods of wondering if the whole dogma were not a sham, of blaming themselves for wondering, and of regaining their peace of mind by concluding that God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, was considerably less rational and considerably less honest than his children are.

But when did the Nazarene ever tolerate the theological plan of salvation? It rejects his plain teaching. It accuses him of teaching doctrines utterly alien to his thought. He never spoke of his approaching death as the execution of a substitute. He never said that because of his death other men's sins were to go unpunished. He never hinted that his death would benefit any one in the last judgment. Human beings would then be judged on their merits solely. If they had obeyed,

he would give them eternal life. If they had disobeyed, he would damn them. And yet this same Nazarene deliberately sought martyrdom. Why?

The question brings us face to face with one of the strangest facts in all history. Looking deeply into the thing, we see that it was neither Jews nor Romans who killed the Nazarene. It was books! He thought that old prophetic scrolls predicted his execution. Those prophecies must be fulfilled.

Reading them now, we see clearly that not one of the prophets had the Nazarene in mind when they described a servant of God who must suffer. The servant of God was an imaginary figure, personifying an entire generation. The entire generation was to suffer. A remnant would be saved. Then the world would improve.

The prophets, it will be remembered, were upstart laymen assuming to speak for God. They had no credentials beyond their own accounts of marvellous ordinations whereby Jehovah had made them his spokesmen. To get a hearing and keep it, they used spiritual terrorism. God, they said, was about to bring hideous punishment upon his people because of their sins.

However, there were limits beyond which spiritual terrorism never quite dared to go. Old legends told how God had turned upon his people many centuries before. He had not drowned the entire race. Moreover, he had promised not to send another flood, and had created the rainbow as a sign that he would keep his word. From time to time rainbows were still seen.

Again, spiritual terrorism found it necessary, when picturing the new severities God had in store for his people, to reckon with sentimental considerations. The wrath of God had been a long time accumulating. Generation after generation had offended. As there was no resurrection, they could not be punished. When, therefore, the accumulated wrath of God descended, the living would be suffering for the sins of the dead as well as for their own sins. Even the righteous would suffer, as the calamities foretold were to be national calamities. But there would be something magnificent in the sufferings of the righteous. They would in a sense be purchasing an improved world for posterity. Because they had suffered, posterity would escape further visitations of the divine fury.

All this is very Jewish. It portrays a very Jewish God who, having indulged in a wild outburst of rage, would feel better. Very Jewish, too, was the emergence of that imaginary figure, the servant of God, personifying the righteous who would suffer for the sins of past generations and to the advantage of generations yet to come. Personification was instinctive—a natural impulse of the Jewish mind. That mind saw the Jewish race as a person, by name Israel. It saw the various tribes as persons, and called them by the names of their supposed progenitors. A Jewish-Christian even called the spirit of God a person. But when the old Jewish prophets spoke of the martyr generation as a person, it never entered their thought that the time would come when a young Jewish student of their writings would think himself definitely pointed out therein.

Just this was what happened. Mistaking the figurative servant of God for the Messiah, the student of old prophetic scrolls became convinced that, inasmuch as he was the Messiah, he must seek and find martyrdom. He was perhaps the first to confuse the ideas. Perhaps others had confused

them before him. At all events he was not alone in confusing them. By way of proving his Messiahship, his followers quoted ancient verses describing the servant of God and made converts by so doing. It was thought good logic.

But the young rabbi never looked upon his approaching martyrdom as a consequence of dead men's sins. Nor did he think that his martyrdom would usher in a reign of happiness upon earth. The earth itself was soon to perish. In seeking to fulfil prophecy he permitted himself the same latitude of reinterpretation as when fulfilling the law. In a new sense, wholly his own, he would give his life as a ransom for many. If dying for his gospel could buy acceptance of his gospel, then, in order to ransom men from bondage to themselves, he could die willingly. He believed that where persuasion and threats and patient teaching had failed, his crucifixion would succeed. Lifted up, he would draw all men to him, he is said to have declared. Of those so drawn, whole multitudes would escape condemnation in the last judgment.

Thus the idea of martyrdom, though mistakenly

derived from old Jewish scrolls not one of which designated the Nazarene as a martyr, harmonized perfectly with his conception of his mission and with his character. He would die for his friends —greater love had no man than that. His death would not save them; only obeying him could; but his death, by its shock, by its appeal to the affections, and by its proof of his sincerity, would force men to obey.

Little did he imagine how soon the theorists and metaphysicians would find in his death the basis for a plan of salvation that attached supreme importance to things quite different from obeying.

XXVII

TIBERIUS CÆSAR ruled Judea through a governor who killed himself after being sent to Rome to answer for his violence, his cruelties, and his habit of executing Jews without even the form of a trial. This man, Pontius Pilate by name, detested Jews and took a vicious delight in insulting them. Knowing their hatred of idolatry and their abhorrence of graven images, he made his legionaries enter Jerusalem with figures of the god-emperor on their standards.

Martyrdom at the hands of such a despot was not difficult to obtain, so to Jerusalem went the Nazarene, accompanied by his pupils. He chose a time when the city would be crowded and the Roman authorities in a nervous mood, ready to deal harshly with any one who caused a disturbance. Then, too, it was a time when an uproar within the Jewish church would most deeply offend the church authorities. Passover week it was.

That the young rabbi counted on being haled before the Roman authorities and put to death at their command, is made clear by what he told his pupils on the way to Jerusalem, and other things he told them show us how he expected to get himself delivered up to the Roman authorities. He said the Jewish clergy would arrange all that. He knew how he was going to make them do so.

But he had not foreseen the outburst of enthusiasm that was to mark his arrival and hasten the very result he desired. As he was riding up to the city a great crowd collected, throwing down their cloaks before him, strewing the road with branches hacked from trees, and cheering him as rightful king of the Jews.

Just who these enthusiasts were, just what they thought they were doing, and just how much earnestness there was behind their enthusiasm, no one knows. But the thing had all the look of a nationalist demonstration in a Roman colony. It was sure to be heard from later. In Jerusalem, a little place of about forty thousand, nothing strikingly unusual could occur without attracting general attention. This particular occurrence made

so much talk throughout the city that children knew of it, and cheered the Nazarene in the temple. They, too, called him king.

When that happened, he showed pleasure. He had shown no displeasure when the crowds cheered him as king on his way into town, for he understood perfectly what a nationalist demonstration in a Roman colony could lead to.

All the circumstances made it appear ominous. Except for a legend that says he visited Jerusalem at the age of twelve, there is nothing to suggest that he had ever been there before; the great bulk of the population, never having heard of him until now, asked who he was; so, while Galilee had learned to interpret the man and his claims, as both he and his staff had been educating Galilee for years, Jerusalem would have no comprehension of him. He would be regarded as a pretender to the Jewish throne. As such, he would be executed.

But he had come up to the capital with a set plan—i.e., to make the chief priests and elders deliver him into the hands of Pilate, and this he proceeded to do. Daily he taught in the temple. By what right? When asked, he refused to say.

Daily he attacked the reactionaries, calling them vipers and the offspring of vipers. Daily he made fresh enemies by letting pedants and sectarians try to catch him in his words and catching them in theirs. Daily he conducted a drugless clinic in the temple itself, winning a popular acclaim that affrighted the orthodox—allowed to keep on, this radical from a despised town in Lower Galilee would have the nation at his back, and where would sacerdotalism be then?

All through those days of bidding for martyrdom, he was tactless, casting pearls before swine, using invective instead of persuasion, and so belying his real character that, in judging the kind of man he was, the historian must take the situation for what it was—especially one notorious episode, his onslaught on the tradesmen and money-changers.

A large yard surrounded the temple, and there the dealers in oxen, sheep, and doves supplied worshippers with victims for the altar. To the temple priests this toleration of business in the yard outside seemed no more a sacrilege than does the collection of money in church seem a sacrilege to us. But the Nazarene was shocked.

At any other time he would have contented himself with admonishing the offenders; violence he had never used thus far; violence his whole teaching had forbidden. Now, however, he could use violence for effect. He rushed upon the tradesmen and money-changers in a fury of indignation, overturning tables and stools and brandishing a whip.

Such scenes as this were not wanted by the Jewish clergy during Passover week, of all times, nor were the clergy flattered when the Nazarene told them that under their management the place of prayer had become a den of thieves. Along with other affronts, the affair did precisely what the young rabbi from Nazareth intended it to do. One night a gang of clergy, beadles, and soldiers caught him and dragged him before the high priest.

When questioned by that dignitary, he made out a bad case for himself, purposely. With a boldness deliberately calculated to scandalize and with a mode of statement surest to horrify, he said that he was the Messiah, that he was the son of God, that he would be seen sitting at the right hand of power, and that he would come on the clouds of heaven.

By all standards of Jewish ecclesiastical law,

this was blasphemy. The penalty under Jewish ecclesiastical law was death. But the day had gone by when the priesthood could execute its own sentences. In order to get the Nazarene put to death, it would be necessary to secure his condemnation under Roman law. That seemed easy. He had figured in a nationalist demonstration. In the temple he had let children cheer him as king.

Next day he was taken before Pilate and charged with having laid claim to the throne of his ancestor, David. When the governor asked him if he was king of the Jews, he replied that he was, carefully refraining from any attempt to explain in what sense he used the words.

With his habitual scorn of all things Jewish, Pilate at first refused to dignify the alleged pretender by punishing him. He refused to dignify his captors by admitting the importance of the arrest they had made. For some minutes it looked to the temple gang as if the Nazarene might be let off. But a great crowd had collected—a crowd principally composed of his enemies. They howled for his conviction, the governor yielded, and the man of Nazareth was led away to be crucified.

His torturers from that moment forward were not Jews. They were not Romans. They were Græco-Syrians serving in the Roman legion for hire—anti-Semites, all. Great fun they had, plaguing this Jew whom they took for a would-be kinglet. They dressed him up as a mock emperor, stuck a crown of thorns on his head, and gave him a stick for a sceptre. They hooted him. They mauled and spat upon him. When they crucified him they hung a jeering label on his cross, making sport of his royal majesty.

It was a martyrdom tragic beyond anything his followers have seen in it and the most that they have seen was not there. It represented no intervention between an utterly depraved race and a God at once vindictive and unfair. There was no utterly depraved race. There was no vindictive God, no God capable of such unfairness. Still less was the young rabbi's martyrdom a symbol of his rejection by his own. The world was not repudiating the discoverer of the humanity in God, the discoverer of the divinity in man, the discoverer of a power making for righteousness, the discoverer of the new birth. He was crucified by

Jew-baiters let loose upon him by a governor of Jews who hated Jews. Even the clergy who took him to the governor acted less from hostility to his gospel than from hostility to the Nazarene. He had not given them an opportunity of understanding his gospel. It was a gospel no one trained in legalism and ritualism could comprehend in a few days. Meanwhile his attitude toward the clergy any one could comprehend in a moment—from the first he had systematically scandalized and affronted them. Nothing is further from the truth than to picture him as a kind of sacrificial lamb. Sacrificial lambs do not court death. The Nazarene deliberately brought death upon himself.

The profoundly, the unspeakably tragic thing about his death, and the thing every one overlooks, was its futility. He believed that his death would win acceptance for the gospel of obedience. Instead, because misinterpreted almost at once by his own followers, whose misinterpretation became the basis of theology, it replaced his gospel of obedience with a gospel of subterfuge.

His agony in the garden, his betrayal, his de-

sertion by his pupils, his humiliation, his hours of torment on the cross, his utter anguish of soul, even the crazed paroxysm during which for an instant he thought that God had abandoned him—all this he suffered in the hope that he was ransoming men from bondage to themselves, drawing them all to him, making them obey him.

It was a hope that is still unfulfilled. For there was a more elaborate way of being saved, thought the theologians, than by obeying—more elaborate and at the same time easier.

XXVIII

In an unmarked grave, somewhere in Palestine, lies the dust that was once the Nazarene's body. To recover the tomb where they supposed his body had lain for three days, thousands of Crusaders sacrificed their lives, but we hear of no early Christian pilgrimage to that tomb, nor does any tomb whatever appear to have been pointed out as the Nazarene's during the First Century, A.D. In the entire mass of legend concealing the truth as to what became of his body, the spot where it was buried is never indicated. Why?

One explanation, which, if correct, explains also why the young rabbi's followers readily accepted the stories that told how his body rose from the grave and was seen by numerous witnesses and eventually went up into the sky, is an explanation suggested by the case against him under Roman criminal law and at the same time by the case against him under Jewish ecclesiastical law.

He had been executed for an alleged attempt to restore the Jewish monarchy. Any one connected with him was therefore in danger of being charged with participation in the alleged nationalist conspiracy. Under Jewish ecclesiastical law the Nazarene had been found guilty of a capital crime —that of blasphemy. Were not his pupils likewise blasphemous under that law, and would not ordinary prudence bid them disperse and hide and remain in hiding until both the Roman political authorities and the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities had begun to forget the Nazarene?

This is speculation—the kind of speculation a historical novelist might permit himself. It is perhaps erroneous speculation, although misleading. But it gives us at least a possible clue to a mystery that would otherwise be incapable of solution. If the Nazarene's pupils had dispersed and gone into hiding when they found that their master was to be executed as a pretender to the Jewish throne, then, obviously, they never saw what the Roman legionaries did to his body after his death or where the Roman legionaries threw it, nor did they hear the requiem of

anti-Semitic laughter that was his only burial rite.

Observe. This is still nothing but speculation. No one knows what happened. No one can find out. But, supposing the speculation to be sound—many a mere speculation turns out to have been sound—it follows that when the Nazarene's pupils dared to venture forth again and reassemble, they had no first-hand knowledge of what had occurred, and no first-hand evidence with which to correct the stories that already abounded.

Wondrously beautiful stories those were—a rich man had come and taken the master's body and reverently buried it in a new tomb; an angel, whose appearance was like lightning and whose robe was as white as snow, had opened the tomb; forth had gone the master to perform miracles, to speak fresh words of inspiration and comfort, and finally to ascend into heaven and sit down at the right hand of God.

In course of time the stories grew. At the moment of the master's death an earthquake had occurred, it was said, and the veil of the temple had been split in two; moreover, it was now possible

to name the people to whom he had appeared in the body and to tell how they had acted and just what the master did; when Thomas doubted, the master had shown his wounded hands; once, to prove that his body was a physical body, like any man's, he had eaten before witnesses; the story told what he ate; he ate broiled fish. Also, there was a story that, after the Nazarene's resurrection, many bodies of the saints that had slept had come out of their graves and entered the Holy City and been seen there.

Even the story of the master's ascension into the sky took on new details—his eleven surviving pupils had watched him go up; a cloud had received him out of their sight; two white-robed strangers had then appeared and told them that he would one day return in the same manner.

This rapid growth of legend ought not to surprise us. The time and the place account for all that. It was the First Century, A.D.—in the Orient.

The Nazarene's pupils, to be sure, had seen nothing to substantiate such stories, but neither, in all probability, had they seen anything to invali-

date such stories, and the master himself had believed in a bodily resurrection—indeed, he had declared that, if men destroyed the temple of his body, he would rebuild it in three days. What wonder, then, that his pupils, when self-styled eyewitnesses told how his body had risen and for forty days walked the earth and at last ascended into the sky, believed?

And what wonder that his biographers wrote the legends into their narratives in good faith? By that time, the entire church believed them and believed that a bodily resurrection was in store for every man.

Still, the idea of one's own body coming back to life and ascending into heaven presented certain difficulties, and the most celebrated of First-Century theologians hastened to deal with them. In an effort to make the whole thing convincing, he said that on the last day a trumpet would sound. At the sound of the trumpet all the dead would rise and be caught up into the clouds to meet the now deified Nazarene in the air. The living would also be caught up. But while both the living and the dead would have bodies, a kind of instantaneous

transubstantiation would occur at the sound of the last trump. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, terrestrial bodies would be turned into celestial bodies.

Later on, theologians wrote the Apostle's Creed, a formula still recited in church. It proclaims the resurrection of the body, though hardly a Christian to-day thinks his body will rise from the grave, or cares what becomes of it, or sees anything noble or reasonable or consoling in the idea of a bodily resurrection in his own case.

But woe to all who dare suggest that, in an unmarked grave, somewhere in Palestine, lies the dust that was once the Nazarene's body, and woe to all who, though believing that the Nazarene survives death and possesses life eternal, reject a theology in which legend, instead of becoming an aid to faith, becomes an obstacle to faith!

These Easter legends of the Nazarene's bodily resurrection have rare beauty and charm and a symbolism no one would part with. They are an obstacle to faith only when theology falsifies their character by denying that they are legends. Then comes trouble. For there are discrepancies,

all too conspicuous then, and inconsistencies, disturbing then, and affronts to that sense of reality which tells us that truth is reasonable. Out of such embarrassments grows a suspicion of imposture—a feeling that the Nazarene's biographers knew the facts as to what became of the body, and covered up the facts, and lied.

They never knew the facts. They had no means of finding out the facts. They thought the legends were true, and, with entire artlessness and sincerity, passed them on. And we in our turn recognize a duty to preserve those legends, for, although they were legends only, it is to them that early Christianity owed its power to survive the Nazarene's crucifixion.

During the First Century, A.D., there was a great dearth of logic everywhere, and everywhere a great dearth of critical insight, but of imagination there was an overplus. Facts counted for little. One legend, if only it gripped the imagination, could overthrow many a fact, or, no matter how distressing a fact might be, transfigure and glorify it. The Nazarene had been convicted of blasphemy by the highest ecclesiastical court; he

had been tried for sedition before the Roman governor himself; he had been handed over to a rabble of Græco-Syrian Jew-baiters, who had insulted him, tortured him, and finally spiked him to a cross, with a comic label above his head; he had died. Yes, but had not the very earth protested, and had not heaven sent an angel to free him from the tomb, and had not the man of Nazareth, by reappearing in the flesh to resume his teaching and repeat his miracles proclaimed himself victorious? No power could stop him. The Jewish church could not. Even death could not. He had burst the bonds of death and ascended into heaven. Thence he would come again to judge the world and reign. So what had seemed a wholly ignominious defeat was in reality a triumph, his followers said, and now they began to feel that from the first they had misunderstood him—he had never been a man like others, he had been a god. His bodily resurrection proved it.

Though abhorrent to moderns, this idea of a god slain by mortals gripped the imagination of the First Century, A.D., as nothing else could, and the stories of the young rabbi's bodily resurrection

were what gave it its grip upon the imagination of the First Century, A.D. Within an amazingly brief period, the god slain by mortals had worshippers in Palestine and Syria, worshippers in Asia Minor, worshippers in the Ægean Islands, worshippers in Greece, and even worshippers in Rome. Far and wide went the new religion, carrying with it a great load of Jewish mythology, it is true, and gathering accretions of Greek philosophy and Roman legalism as it went, yet sweeping on. Nor did it make converts among the submerged classes alone. From the start, it won scholars, ecclesiasts, aristocrats, and officials. A great company of Jewish priests became Christians. We read also of chief women and of Greek women of honourable estate, and of such notables as Apollos, a learned Alexandrian; Sergius Paulus, a pro-consul; and Menæan, foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, to say nothing of Crispus, who ruled a synagogue, or of Cornelius the centurion, or of a court official from upper Egypt, or of a distinguished Jewish orator and metaphysician and writer named Paul.

In an unmarked grave, all this while, lay the body concerning which such wonderful stories

were being told in Ephesus and Smyrna, in Pergamum, Thyatira and Sardis, in Laodicea and in Corinth, and in the Empire's very capital. The body is now dust, but the stories, by making real to the imagination of the First Century, A.D., the Nazarene's victory over death, and by persuading First-Century minds that the Jew-baiters had killed a god, enabled thousands to listen attentively when his followers spoke of the new birth, of life eternal, of the divinity in man, of the humanity in God, and of the power that reconstructs character.

For a thing had happened that was more wonderful by far than any bodily resurrection could have been. The victim who, when lifted up upon the cross, thought himself the mere founder of a new sect within the Jewish church, had come down from that cross the founder of a world religion.

XXIX

In his study of the Jewish chronicles, the Nazarene had come upon an account of King Solomon and his harem. Solomon, it appears, kept seven hundred wives and three hundred mistresses. An Egyptian seems to have been his favourite. The rest were Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites. So we read that Solomon's heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.

Jehovah, it is true, had no objection to Solomon's keeping a thousand wives and mistresses, but he objected strongly to Solomon's keeping a thousand Gentile wives and mistresses. It was dangerous, as the event proved. The ladies of his harem turned Solomon's heart after Gentile gods. He took to worshipping the Ammonitish Milcom and the Zidonian goddess Ashtoreth. Close to Jerusalem he built high places for Chemosh and Molech—Gentile divinities, both.

These bits of scandal from the old Jewish clas-

sics have an importance to-day, not on their own account, but because they help us to understand the intense anti-foreignism that prevailed among the Jews. It grew out of a well-grounded fear that any contact with Gentiles would lead Jews to adopt Gentile religions.

This fear was what accounted for Ezra's consternation when, on his return to Palestine, he found Jews and Gentiles intermarrying. As the chronicler reports, Ezra tore his clothes, pulled out his hair and beard, cast himself down before the house of God, and prayed. At his command a council was held, and, in obedience to the council's decision, all Jews who had married Gentiles sent away their wives. We are told that some of those Jews sent away wives by whom they had children.

It is not to be supposed that questions regarding mere race purity interested the young rabbi of Nazareth when he read these stories in the old Jewish scrolls. All marrying and giving in marriage were soon to cease. But the underlying principle he recognized. It was a principle written into the ancient Jewish law forbidding Jews to make treaties with their Gentile neighbours. It

was a principle written into the ancient law forbidding even the tenth generation of Ammonites or Moabites to enter into the assembly of the Lord. It was a principle whose rejection led straight to apostasy, as the Jewish historians had pointed out over and over again.

In certain of the ancient scrolls which he examined, the young rabbi had found here and there a rhapsodic prediction that some day all nations would be permitted to join the Jews, and he read that one prophet in particular was told to be a light to the Gentiles. But this seemingly amiable attitude toward the Gentile world was capable of a by no means lovely interpretation. A Jewish hymn, in which Jehovah was represented as promising his chosen people the nations for their inheritance, made him tell his chosen people to break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

It is true that the young rabbi of Nazareth believed that, when he came again to judge the world and reign, all nations would be summoned before him. It is true, moreover, that he had no deep-rooted personal dislike of Gentiles; he could con-

verse on matters spiritual with a woman of Samaria, though the Samaritans were not only Gentiles but especially obnoxious Gentiles in that they set up to be Jews; he could even make a Samaritan the hero of one of his most telling fables. Yet there lurked always in his mind the inherited Jewish suspicion that any contact with Gentiles was a bit dangerous. When sending out his followers as itinerant propagandists, he felt that if they went among the Gentiles their faith would be corrupted, so ordered them to avoid Gentiles completely. It was a point well taken. Contact with Gentiles did corrupt his followers' faith later on, Hellenizing it, Romanizing it, and, as some historians declare, injecting into it Egyptian superstitions prevalent among the Alexandrians.

Our missionaries love to quote a precept of the Nazarene's that bids them go far and wide in the earth and preach the gospel to every creature. His favourite pupil says that he said this, but says that he said it after his death. During his lifetime, according to that same favourite pupil, he said that he had other sheep not of the Jewish fold; those also he must bring. Here, quite possibly, we have

a reliable transcription of what he did say. But those other sheep—were they to be brought while the world still went its usual course? No, they were to be brought only when the world's last day arrived. Not until then would Gentiles from the east and Gentiles from the west sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In plain language, transcribed by writers much more accurate than was his favourite pupil, the Nazarene said that this unheard-of marvel was to attend his second coming.

During his lifetime he disregarded the Gentile world almost completely. He was no foreign missionary himself; he appointed no foreign missionaries; he planned no foreign missionary campaign; he never suggested that the conversion of the Gentiles was desirable. To be sure, he never deliberately counted them out, but not once did he count them in. Though the founder of a world religion, he went to his death firmly convinced that he was only the founder of a new denomination among the Jews. Though the founder of a world religion, he so little realized what he was accomplishing that he tied up his world religion

to the most exclusive, the most intolerant, and the most anti-foreign religion on earth.

Now, it happened that, all this while, a young Pharisee named Paul was studying the classics under Rabbi Gamaliel, but glorying in his Roman citizenship and risking contact with Gentiles. Not long after the Nazarene's death he became a Christian. Marvellous legends hide the circumstances. A historian of the early church even put those legends into a speech he says Paul delivered. And yet one thing is clear. After his conversion Paul withdrew into Arabia—we have his own word for that in a letter he wrote—and, if any germ of anti-foreignism remained to be eradicated, it is evident that the process was complete by the time he returned to Palestine and allied himself with the Nazarene's followers. This Paul, cured of race bigotry and gifted with a genius for understanding the Gentile mind, saw that, if only the new faith could be detached from Judaism, there was nothing to prevent its becoming a world religion of the first order. He proceeded, accordingly, to detach it.

He had never met the Nazarene. He had never

heard him preach. He possessed no first-hand proof that the Nazarene meant to found only a new denomination among the Jews. Second-hand testimony to that effect he disregarded. When told that the Nazarene had said he came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, and when told that the Nazarene had indorsed the ancient Jewish sacrificial system along with virtually the whole of Jewish ceremonialism, this former Pharisee was not disturbed. He rejected the law. He rejected the ancient Jewish sacrificial system. He rejected ceremonialism. When other followers of the Nazarene declared that Gentiles, in order to become Christians, must first become Jews, he spurned the idea. Between Jews and Gentiles there was no longer any distinction. All were sons of God. For all alike the Messiah had died. Both Jew and Gentile must soon appear before his judgment throne, where racial and even religious antecedents would count for nothing. There was no longer a chosen people. Henceforth there was a chosen world.

Yet a strange combination was Paul, and it is difficult to say which element predominated in

him, the radical or the conservative; for no sooner had he detached Christianity from Judaism than he set about attaching Judaism to Christianity. He saw human nature in the light of the old Jewish legend of Adam and his fall. He saw God in the light of the ancient Jewish legends of Jehovah. He saw the Nazarene in the light of the ancient Jewish sacrifices. If he denied that Gentiles must become Jews before becoming Christians, he went an astonishing long way toward forcing them to become Jews after becoming Christians.

He was a wonderful, brilliant, courageous, indefatigable, devoted, and altogether heroic ambassador of the faith. Universality had been inherent in that faith from the first, though its founder never recognized it. Paul not only recognized its inherent universality, he made its inherent universality a fact. And if he was a bad theologian—few have been worse—he was exploring a new field of thought and making just the mistakes any Pharisee in his place would have made, except that Paul's were less numerous.

But here we are giving a modern estimate of Paul. It is not the theologian's estimate. For

theologians, little though they confess it, regard Paul as a vastly more important figure, intellectually, than was the Nazarene. Indeed, it is not overstating matters in the least to say that orthodoxy, though little confessing it, regards the Nazarene as, intellectually, the forerunner of Paul.

So to-day we find men ridiculing Adam and his fall, scorning the theological portrait of God as Jehovah, repudiating the idea of an altar victim slain on their behalf, and fancying that thus they reject the Nazarene. They mistake themselves. They are rejecting only an ex-Pharisee and amateur theologian.

XXX

EVERYONE permits himself now and then to wonder what the Nazarene would think and say if he could visit a modern church, and, quite without intending it, Christian art now and then raises that question within the sacred edifice itself. There, unconsciously rebuking the splendour, the formalism, and the elaborate organization of modern worship, some designer of stained glass shows us the man of Nazareth preaching to Galilean peasants on a hilltop or beside a lake.

The rebuke is fallacious. The same young rabbi who taught chiefly in the open air taught also in the temple and found nothing to condemn in the temple service, splendid, formal and elaborately organized though it was. Frequently he taught in synagogues, but never suggested a transformation of the synagogue service. Indeed, we know perfectly what he expected a parish church to be. It was to be a Jewish synagogue, indistinguishable

from its prototype save at one point only. It was to be attended by inwardly transformed Jews.

Concerning the churches that sprang up with such rapidity in Palestine and Syria, in Asia Minor, in the Ægean Islands, in Greece and even in Italy, little is recorded, yet that little suffices to show how astonished the man of Nazareth would have been if he could have visited them.

They were no longer Jewish synagogues. They were strongholds of apostasy. A new religion, a religion the Nazarene had never sought to introduce and a religion that often disregarded his own teachings, had supplanted the faith of the fathers. Behold, men were praying to him in those churches! Men were worshipping him! It was as if the high priest's accusation had been true and he had made himself equal with God! Indeed, he might well have been asked if he had not become of greater importance in the minds of those worshippers than was their Father in Heaven.

Not once in his whole life did the suspicion occur to him that such things could ever happen. Tributes of affection he welcomed; worship, never; and in all his discourses on prayer he never once

hinted that men were to pray to him. They were to worship God, and God only. They were to pray to God, and to God only.

He said a great deal about prayer. There were no limits to what prayer could accomplish. He taught men how to pray. They must avoid long prayers. They must avoid reiteration in prayer. They must not pray in public; the believer was to enter into his inner chamber, shut the door, and pray secretly. He even dictated a form of prayer addressed, not to the Nazarene, but to God, and it ended without mention of himself.

But, only a short while after his death, the churches were asking God to answer prayer for the Nazarene's sake. We know because of passages in letters written by early Christians, who imply that the custom was prevalent in their day, and who speak of him as our intercessor before the throne, our advocate with the Father. So common was the practice that when his favourite pupil came to write his biography, he forgot and put into his master's own mouth words bidding men to pray in his name. Not content with that, he made his master claim to be the answerer of prayer. In en-

tire good faith he did this. He was a mystic and theologian, convinced that the Nazarene had created the universe—all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made—so why should not the Nazarene be also the answerer of prayer? And because he had enjoyed such intimate companionship with his master during three years of his youth, he was unaware that many of the teachings he had received became coloured with his own theology long before he began writing his famous biography late in life.

Are we then deploring the early Christian custom of worshipping the man of Nazareth and of praying to him or in his name? No, not at all. In so far as it was a very beautiful and very touching kind of anthropomorphism, it had a value only the undiscerning will fail to appreciate. It made real to First-Century imaginations the humanity of God. In days when no one living could think of God as a spirit without demanding somehow to picture that spirit, it enabled believers to see God through the human tenderness and sweetness and devotion in a matchless human personality. If meanwhile it veiled the truth that the same tender-

ness, the same sweetness, and the same devotion are in God himself, to whom the Nazarene promised men direct access, with no need of any intercessor or advocate whatsoever, such truth was difficult of comprehension then, and, to many a devout soul, it is difficult of comprehension to-day.

Again, we may be sure that the prophet of Nazareth, had he visited an early Christian church, would have been astonished to learn of deacons, of elders, of bishops, of a presbytery, and of a new and unauthorized custom, the laying on of hands. He had left no instructions regarding church organization. He had expected the synagogue organization to continue until his second coming. And this laying on of hands—what did it mean? That a new hierarchy was being established? He had planned no new hierarchy. He had instituted no rite of ordination. He himself had never been ordained. If some mystic—or shall we say magic? —power could be bestowed by the laying on of hands, it was a thing he had not foreseen.

Still again, the Nazarene would have been astonished to find in the early church a daily ceremony known as the love-feast and would have been

somewhat puzzled at first by the early Christian belief that he had established it.

He had commanded no such daily rite, though a certain annual rite he had endorsed—a Jewish rite, the Passover. According to legend, the Passover commemorated the escape of Jewish first-born children when Jehovah walked through Egypt killing Egyptian first-born children; by the blood of lambs spattered on Jewish door-posts and lintels he had known which houses to pass over.

The Nazarene, when partaking of the Passover meal with his pupils on the eve of his arrest, was reminded of the slain lambs and of the mention of a lamb in the prophetic sentences describing the suffering servant of God—sentences he had applied to himself. Facing death and knowing it, he saw in the Passover bread and wine the symbols of a new and very different Passover. The bread was his body. The wine his blood. The new Passover was to liberate men from their bondage to themselves. Not in their stead, yet for their sake, he was to suffer.

Addressing the little intimate group at table,

he told them that this was his last meal on earth and asked them to remember him at each year's Passover feast henceforth, thinking of the bread as his martyred body, the wine as his shed blood.

That he asked others besides his pupils to put this interpretation upon the Passover feast does not appear, nor can we learn that he attributed to it the mystical potentiality theologians assume that he did. His favourite pupil, though a mystic through and through, is the biographer who says least about it. Even Paul thought the ceremony a memorial. To him, it was that only, albeit a most sacred memorial, whose profanation would bring dire consequences.

Yet every night in the week the entire First Century church was observing the ceremony, and too often the early church abused it. At Corinth —but let that pass. Bad table manners and excessive drinking were not so much a reflection upon early Corinthian Christians as upon the paganism from which those early Corinthian Christians had but just emerged. The point worth noting is that an observance enjoined only upon the Nazarene's immediate pupils had become a universal observ-

ance. What he intended as a yearly memorial had become a daily memorial.

A very great surprise would have been his could he have seen this, and still greater would be his surprise if he could attend worship at certain of our churches to-day. There the Holy Communion is for many the profoundest, most inspiring, and altogether the most beautiful experience in life. To mystics—we have still our mystics, and always shall have—it brings exaltation and something akin to ecstasy. The mere fact that it is a development of post-Christian Christianity and unauthorized by Christianity's founder need not prompt us to question its value—where value it has.

But there are temperaments upon whose sensibilities it exerts no such advantageous influence. There are minds so made that an unsatisfied and unsatisfiable inquisitiveness becomes disturbing—minds that seek to know definitely, precisely, what the symbolism symbolizes, and lean toward unrest when they fail. Also, there is a by no means uncommon alternation of mood—the same believer will be a mystic in one mood, something of a rationalist in another, and chide himself because he can-

not always find in the Holy Communion what he is devoutly persuaded that he ought to find. And there are doubters, especially when the church takes the symbol literally. Many a man has rejected the Nazarene because he could not believe that bread and wine are by any process to be transformed to-day into a body that was buried in an unmarked grave, somewhere in Palestine, nineteen centuries ago, and whose dust is still there.

To all these troubled believers, and to these disbelievers as well, one may point out that the broadest liberty is granted to moderns as regards the interpretation and the use of a sacrament never instituted by the rabbi of Nazareth, who would perhaps tell us that the Holy Communion was made for man and not man for the Holy Communion.

And it would seem that a liberty no less broad is granted to moderns as regards the interpretation and the use of baptism. It was not the Nazarene who instituted baptism, it was his cousin and forerunner who instituted it. Though the Nazarene himself received baptism and told his followers to baptize their converts, not one of his recorded utterances indicates that he attached importance to

any precise mode of baptism as over against another, nor do we find that he ever dictated any precise dogma to define the meaning of baptism. From the few things he did say we get the impression that he valued it as a symbol and as a pledge. It symbolized a man's complete break with his past—old sins were washed away and a new life begun. It was a pledge in that the man received baptism publicly.

To ceremonialists, this failure of the Nazarenes to give definite instructions regarding the one distinctive ceremony whose observance he made obligatory and universal appears strange. It was not. Except for the reverence he had for his cousin, all of whose teachings he felt obliged to indorse, he would never have commanded baptism or so much as thought of it. He was no militant high churchman. Ritual enough already existed among the Jews. If he was sufficiently high church to tolerate a ceremonialism that already existed, he had no ambition to add anything to it. Indeed, even his toleration of ceremonialism had its limits. By way of rebuking extreme insistence upon the minutiæ of spiritual etiquette, he would

sometimes go to the opposite extreme, deliberately, and eat with unwashen hands. For the militant high churchmen of his day he had only contempt. They were blind leaders of the blind, substituting the letter for the spirit, outward observance for inward transformation, piety for righteousness.

In view of all this, can we not reply with some assurance to those who wonder what the man of Nazareth would think and say if he could visit a modern church? Its splendour, its formalism, and its elaborately organized service he would approve, but on one condition only. Its priestly system he would tolerate, but on one condition only. Its modernized love-feast he would sanction, but on one condition only. The mystical view of baptism he would condone, but on one condition only. Its mistaken worship of himself he would forgive, but on one condition only.

That one condition the Nazarene's whole purpose makes plain. He demanded obedience to his commandments. From the beginning of his mission to the end he demanded it. His death was a demand for it. When he came again in glory to judge the world, there was to be a single test—

Had men obeyed his commandments? Nothing else would count. So we ourselves may ask concerning present-day piety the question he would ask:

Does it make men obey?

XXXI

A PRODIGIOUS assertion was current among early Christians regarding the Nazarene. He had been perfect, they declared. He had never sinned. Holy, guileless, undefiled, and separated from sinners—these are their own words—he had been in character the flawless image of God.

For centuries the assertion has gone unchallenged. Even scoffers accept it. The same scoffers who jeer at his supposed miracles, scorn his deification, and ridicule two thirds of his commandments affirm that here, for once, was a perfect man. How do they know?

Thirty years of his life are veiled in mystery. Where was he during those thirty years? Nazareth had an evil reputation. It was not a good town to grow up in. How were those thirty years spent? Beyond our knowledge that he learned carpentry and mastered the old Jewish classics, all is blank, nor is there any record to guide our

surmises concerning the development of his character during those years. Was there struggle? Was there a gradual enlightenment, a progressive response to enlightenment? If so, when did it first dawn upon him that he was the Messiah? Of that tremendous experience, big with portent not only for the man himself but for all mankind, nothing is told us. It would seem that the Nazarene never spoke of it, and that his strangely incurious pupils never asked him to.

And concerning the three years of his public career as a healer and teacher, what have we but brief, fragmentary, and intensely partisan accounts written by enthusiasts who believed him to have been a god?

We have much. The accounts themselves reveal far more than their authors consciously sought to reveal. Those authors were not consciously painting their own portraits, yet they have done just that. They show us men utterly artless, utterly sincere. They show us also the naïve methods they employed in compiling their biographies. Their inconsistencies, their childlike faith in legends and old prophecies, their proneness to let theological

prepossessions colour their apprehension of fact—all these quaint self-confessions are right on the surface. They took no pains to conceal them. They have turned their minds inside out. Had they for one moment suspected that their hero was less noble in character than they implied, the suspicion would declare itself. We find no trace of any such suspicion. They are wholly convinced. Despite the unlimited claims they make for him, we never find them covering anything up. They saw no need of covering anything up. They felt that there was nothing to cover up, and they realized that among their readers there would be many who had known the man of Nazareth.

Again, they show us his pupils. Nothing is said about their unswerving fidelity to him for three years. It is passed over as a thing in no wise remarkable. Yet what a testimony it gives! Here were twelve men, in daily, intimate contact with him during all that time. They heard from his lips such precepts as no one in the world had ever heard from human lips before—strange, wonderful, almost blindingly idealistic precepts—precepts that would have made any teacher ridiculous in the

eyes of his pupils unless he had consistently lived up to them, himself. Yet there were no withdrawals from the group. To the very end, the twelve remained the same twelve.

Then, too, we have access to letters written years afterward by followers of the Nazarene and to the reports of speeches they made. Many of those speeches were addressed to unbelievers. They were argumentative. They undertook to remove obstacles to faith. Not one of them implies that among such obstacles to faith was a story discrediting the man's personal character. The letters were addressed to early Christians. Repeatedly they cautioned the faithful to beware of false doctrine. There were mischief-makers about, spreading unauthorized beliefs. Great harm they were doing, thought the writers. But never once in that entire literature of admonition can we find traces of an effort to discount any damaging rumours about the Nazarene's private life. We are left to conclude that even his worst enemies, the adherents of Jewish orthodoxy, had circulated no such rumours.

This is significant. For Judaism was on the defensive, at first, then viciously hostile, using every

available weapon against the new religion, and the most effective weapon against a new religion, always, is the circulation of reports detrimental to its founder. In Nazareth, where people were anything but saints, it should have been easy to pick up disparaging gossip, if such there was. We have no evidence that this had been done. We have no evidence that the experiment was ever thought worth trying.

Moreover, from Nazareth came members of the man's own family. They knew every detail of his life during those hidden years. If they had at first shown unwillingness to recognize his claim to be a prophet, they made up for it now, and believed that he had been a god. His brothers joined the Christians.

Still more significant, when we come to examine it, is the ease with which his followers accomplished his deification. We have said that Greeks and then Romans had brought into Palestine the idea that men could be gods. Alexander the Great had been a god. Cæsar had been a god. Also we have said that, if Jehovah could be a man—and in the Jewish mind he was completely anthropomor-

phic—the way was made ready for a man's deification. But observe. Neither Alexander nor Cæsar had been deified by popular acclaim. They themselves attended to their deification. Popular acclaim came later. And at best they were mere heathen gods. Whereas, the young rabbi of Nazareth became a god only after his death and despite his clear teachings to the contrary; and whereas the young rabbi of Nazareth became a Christian god. Just here lies the significance of his deification. After all his unprecedented and amazingly beautiful declarations regarding the character of God, declarations that had filled men with awed astonishment when they heard them, his own intimates, having known him for three years, identified him with that God. This they first did in a moment of excitement. Afterward, they theorized. Singularly diverse were their theories. But the main idea they never relinquished. Nothing they could remember about the Nazarene's character—no slightest act or word or impulse—seemed to them in any way capable of invalidating it. For that main idea they were ready to sacrifice their lives.

But the supreme testimony to the Nazarene's matchless beauty of character comes, not from others, but from himself, secretive though he tried to be. Concerning his own moral self-estimate, he said nothing—except once, when he repudiated the idea that he was morally perfect. Yet behold what he disclosed, nevertheless!

We have called him the greatest religious genius of all time, and so he was. But religious genius is not a phenomenon of intellect alone or of inspired imagination alone, or of spiritual insight alone. It is not a phenomenon compounded of all three. Primarily it is a moral phenomenon. From character and from character only, proceeds its enlightenment of intellect. From character and from character only, proceeds its inspired imagination. From character and from character only, proceeds its spiritual insight. In clear language, though without conscious reference to himself, the Nazarene revealed the secret of his genius. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

There was an unconscious self-revelation, too, in his assumption of Messiahship. For the Messiahship, as he conceived it, involved martyrdom,

and a martyrdom altogether unique. Other heroes of the faith have confronted martyrdom suddenly. They have not walked steadily toward it for years. They have not deliberately adopted a career whose culmination, definitely recognized from the first, was to be the seeking and obtaining of a shameful death. This man, the instant he felt himself to be the Messiah, saw vividly the consequence. Strong indeed was the temptation to say he had been mistaken, that the passages in those ancient scrolls must have meant some one else and not himself, that he was unworthy, that it was not he who must suffer, that it was not he who must come again and judge the world. And yet, he had no such doubts. Forth he went, the most pathetic figure in history —and the most glorious.

As we read of him in the narratives left us by First-Century writers, we are struck with wonder. His devotion, his self-forgetfulness, his abounding love, his heroism, and his complete purity of motive—whence came they? His biographers account for them by telling us that he was a god. He himself, in teachings faithfully recorded by those same biographers, gives a different explanation.

It is not outspoken. It is implied. But it is implied so often and so consistently and so unmistakably as to amount to nothing less than a confession. What does it tell us? This:

That one man actually dared to believe himself a son of God, and to live as if he were;

That one man actually recognized the life of God within his own soul and let it control him completely;

That one man actually thought there was a power making for righteousness, and trusted it to the full;

That one man actually risked calling the most exalted idealism practical, and made it so;

In a word, that one man was Christian through and through in his beliefs, and applied those beliefs in practice, and became Christian through and through in character.

Very strange this has seemed ever since. It was not. If it has seemed strange, we may suggest that one reason, perhaps, is to be found in the universal carelessness with which generation after generation overlooks a remarkable thing that can happen if a man takes the Nazarene's ideas seriously. They work.

XXXII

IN THIS our study of the Nazarene, we have found the man himself—a man of his time yet of all time—a man not only credible but convincing. His faith, once we apprehend it, grips the modern mind and conscience; an inner response gives it the sanction, the tenacity, and the power he himself foretold. Lo, the Kingdom of God is within us!

To find him has not been difficult. Any one may find him simply by reading the Bible all through uninterruptedly from beginning to end with an honest, open mind that will let the printed pages speak.

The very first page warns the reader that he must distinguish between realities and unrealities, by showing a panorama of Jewish mythology. It is not presented as such. The compilers never regarded it as such. They considered it a masterpiece of science and of history. But the reader is quick to perceive its nature. It depicts an imagi-

nary universe, an imaginary drama of creation, an imaginary god.

Other warnings follow. Myths crowd on myths in swift succession, and presently come stories in which the reader is reminded how myths originate. As he knew before, they are fanciful explanations of things that puzzled ancient peoples. One type of myth, illustrated by numerous examples, is seen to have developed out of the Jews' inquisitiveness concerning strange monuments they found and concerning the names of places.

A pillar at Beth-el set them wondering. Who had erected it? What purpose had it served? Why was the place called Beth-el? In answer to these questions came a story about Jacob and his dream. It was Jacob who had set up the pillar, they said. He had set it up as a monument to his dream. And because he saw angels in his dream, he had named the place Beth-el, the House of God. Such stories abound in the Old Testament. Each of them concludes with a phrase unwittingly revealing the motive for its invention.

And ere long the Bible acquaints the reader with legend. To the writers, legend was not legend, it

was history. Hence the entire absence of any effort on the writers' part to make legend plausible or in any way to disguise its nature. There it stands, plainly discernible for what it is. The reader's attention is called fearlessly to giants, to people who lived many hundreds of years, to a nation that walked dry shod through the sea, to a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night that led them in the wilderness, to miraculous food from heaven, to musicians who demolished a city wall by blowing trumpets.

Further on, the Bible sets over against these wonder-laden tales two narratives completely devoid of wonders. Ezra reports the march of eighteen hundred Jews homeward from exile. They are not led by a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. They are not supernaturally rationed. Nothing miraculous occurs at all. Nehemiah reports in detail the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Again no miracles. Why?

As the reader perceives, it is because both Ezra and Nehemiah wrote shortly after the events they described and because they described events in which they themselves had participated. Hence

the inference—a correct one—that what produces legend is a story's repetition by word of mouth through a considerable period of time, so that when at last somebody writes it down it has but little resemblance to fact. Nor is the reader alarmed by the discovery. All that the Bible tells him about ancient Jewish life makes such embroidering of history seem inevitable.

An imaginative race was bound by customs that fettered and starved the imagination. They had no art. They had no drama. The Bible mentions no troubadours or minnesingers. The few love-songs that existed were interesting mainly because coarse, and the same may be said of the few love stories that existed—notably the one in which a designing widow named Ruth fascinated a rich man by getting into bed with him at her mother-in-law's suggestion. Moreover, the Bible discloses a general dearth of games and sports in a country where the recreational side of life was still undeveloped.

This accounts for the immense popularity of legend-mongering. It was the one amusement, the one soul-satisfying outlet for the imagination.

Among their tents at night, beneath eastern stars and beside snoozing camels, Jewish Bedouins told and retold miraculous wonder-compelling tales about Jehovah and the ancients. The oftener they told them the more miraculous and wonder-compelling the tales became.

However, imagination betrayed now and then a curious paucity of resource, and an episode used once would be used over again with new characters. Abraham takes his handsome wife to Gerar, introduces her as his sister, and precipitates complications. But presently the reader learns of Isaac. He, too, has a handsome wife. He, too, goes to Gerar. He, too, introduces his wife as his sister. He, too, precipitates complications.

Nor is that all. The reader is told how Joseph, having produced a great impression by interpreting dreams, became a ruler in Egypt. Before the reader has had time to forget this, he is told how Daniel, having produced a great impression by interpreting dreams, became a ruler in Babylon.

Then, too, he is made acquainted with legends that reappear, only thinly disguised, in the New Testament. He reads of women who bear children

in their old age, of miraculous annunciations, of a sovereign who orders infants slaughtered, and of a little boy, Samuel, who figures grandly in the house of God.

To the theological mind, the warning proclaimed by this resemblance between Old Testament legends and New Testament legends is shocking. To the theological mind, any one who notes the resemblance is a sinner. Yet have not theologians pronounced the Old Testament a necessary introduction to the New Testament? It is, but in ways quite different from those they insist upon. They prize the Old Testament because it aids them to mistake legend for history in the New Testament and thus to erect that gigantic system of unrealities which, though devoutly endeavouring to establish truth, has the effect only of hiding truth. The modern reader prizes the Old Testament because it aids him to distinguish between legend and history, and thus to dissolve the entire system of unrealities erected by theologians.

In his study of the Old Testament the modern reader learns that the recognition of legend as legend is no calamity. Only by recognizing legend

as legend in the Old Testament can he recognize history as history in the Old Testament. Only by recognizing legend as legend in the Old Testament can he rid himself of a suspicion that the Old Testament is a work of imposture, and the more he examines legend in the Old Testament, observing how natural a growth it was, how innocent, how inevitable, the more he is prepared to comprehend the naturalness, the innocence, and the inevitability of a similar growth elsewhere.

As the Old Testament begins with a warning to the reader, so does the New. He is told of a virgin birth and made aware that he must still discriminate between history and legend. Further on in the New Testament he comes to indications that he must distinguish between truth and theology. Three biographers, one after another, portray the Nazarene as a healer and prophet. Merely by stripping away legend, we behold the man himself. He is the same healer and prophet in all three biographies. Then, at the very front of the fourth, not only conspicuous by position but amazing in its audacity, stands a passage in which the healer and prophet suddenly becomes the creator

of the universe; the same was in the beginning with God—indeed, was God; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Thus warned—what fortuitous warning could be more emphatic?—the reader is on his guard not only against legend but against theology. He finds theologian after theologian attributing to the man of Nazareth powers the man of Nazareth never claimed, a nature the man of Nazareth never imagined himself to possess, and ideas the man of Nazareth by his own teachings repeatedly took pains to invalidate. So glaring is the contrast between the real man and the fictional divinity created by these early Christian theologians that the reader has no difficulty in deciding which to accept.

As he rounds out the great task of reading the Bible all through uninterruptedly from beginning to end, the Apocalypse, intensely theological in its interpretation of the Nazarene, gives the final impression. And what is the Apocalypse? An imitation of Ezekiel!

Theologians have told us that the Bible contains

no errors. It is of divine origin, they have said; we must accept its myths as science, its legends as history, its theological speculations as truth alike infallible and complete. They have declared that he who doubts a word of it, anywhere, must in reason repudiate the entire book.

This outrageous superstition, for centuries a burden to the devout, is fast perishing, and, were we to suggest a superstition to replace it, we should declare—wholly without warrant, as is the way in suggesting superstitions—that a special providence arranged the sacred books in order with a view solely to warning the reader against myth, against legend, and against theology.

It is not so. No one imagines that it is so. And yet the very arrangement of those books aids the reader to develop insight and caution. Long before he comes to the story of the Nazarene, he has learned to distinguish between realities and unrealities. Moreover, he has learned to respect myth while rejecting it, and—presently—to respect theology while rejecting it. As a means toward understanding the mind of antiquity, myth is invaluable. As a means toward understanding the

religious sentiment of antiquity, legend is invaluable; the legends of the Nazarene become precious once we recognize them as legends, for they show us the profound impression he had made upon the men among whom he lived. And theology, though now an obstacle to faith, was once a help to faith. It is an obstacle now only when we bestow authority upon it. As a relic of devout antiquity it is precious. Even its most glaring mistakes are. For they show us the spell of wonder, of amazement, and of blinding beauty cast upon those who knew him by the healer and prophet who died on a cross. Looking back, they could account for him in only one way: he had been a god.

XXXIII

HUGO of St. Victor has been dead these eight hundred years. He believed Jerusalem the exact centre of the earth. He declared that the universe had been created instantaneously and also in six days. He was a devout, able, illustrious scholar, but a man of his time—the Twelfth Century, A.D.

Theologians reject the majority of Hugo of St. Victor's ideas, yet are still unable to reject his idea as to the proper way of studying the Bible. He stated it thus: "First learn what is to be believed." In other words, begin with conclusions; decide beforehand, weigh evidence afterward; never allow the Bible to speak until you have let theology tell it what to say.

In no other quest of knowledge do men follow that method to-day, and by following that method theologians invite both ridicule and abuse. They deserve neither. Many of them display brilliant gifts and enormous erudition, not only in the field

of research but in the field of general culture as well. They are superior men. In character they are notable for complete integrity, disinterestedness, and devotion. They have but one purpose—the conversion of mankind. That, instead, they are preventing the conversion of mankind, they fail to perceive.

It is not at all unnatural that they should fail to perceive it. Millions still go to church. If those millions are plagued with doubts bred by the very theology that seeks to remove doubts, they are inarticulate millions, who harbour their doubts in silence. As inarticulate, meanwhile, are the much more numerous millions who spurn the church. These had their spokesmen once—professional "atheists," loud-mouthed and belligerent. To-day they have none.

So it comes about that Twelfth-Century methods appear not to have lost their efficiency. Moreover, both outside the church and within it there prevails an impression that by employing Twentieth-Century methods in our study of the Scriptures we should come upon nothing reliable. There is nothing reliable there, unbelievers say, and believ-

ers imply as much by their extreme anxiety whenever any one suggests that Twentieth-Century methods, far from destroying faith, will rescue faith from the destruction that now threatens it.

Again, among unbelievers, among believers, and even among theologians themselves, one observes an entirely understandable inclination to look back wistfully to a kind of Golden Age. In the time of Victor of St. Hugo things went better than at present, they say; it was the Age of Faith. If at present we believe less easily, they refuse to conclude that Twelfth-Century methods have been outgrown. They tell us instead that piety has declined.

Yet when we examine the Age of Faith, we find that it was also an Age of Ignorance and an Age of Torture. Men easily believed the theologians when there was no knowledge abroad to prevent their believing and when doubt was dangerous. Credulity was no dazzling virtue then. It was the line of least resistance. Quite confidently Hugo of St. Victor could declare that the universe had been created instantaneously and also in six days.

No one alive at the time—and desiring to stay alive—dared contradict him. Not less confidently he could declare that in studying the Bible one must begin with conclusions, decide beforehand and weigh evidence afterward, and never allow the Bible to speak until theology had been permitted to tell it what to say.

For eight hundred years Victor of St. Hugo has ruled theology. Though few Protestants have ever heard of him and though he was never Pope of Rome, he is even to-day the uncrowned Pope of Protestantism. In studying the Bible, Protestants still obey Hugo of St. Victor and "learn first what is to be believed"—yes, in this Twentieth Century!

Ruinous are the results. For when theologians tell us what is to be believed about the Bible—that its writers were miraculously restrained from copying myths into it, from copying legends into it, and from indulging in unwarranted and unwarrantable metaphysical speculations of their own—the Bible itself bids us choose between Scripture and theology—indeed, between truth and theology. For there stand the myths. There stand the leg-

ends. There stand the metaphysical speculations, at once unwarranted and unwarrantable. And the reader, forbidden to distinguish between reality and unreality, is betrayed in a needlessly bewildered state of mind that attaches no more actual weight to the real than to the unreal. He has never the untroubled, because automatic, conviction that he is anywhere dealing with facts as authentic and undeniable as those in other realms of history. He is conscious at best of exercising faith. In exercising it he feels virtuous. For human nature is so made that whenever we tell ourselves a thing is true, though probably not, we think we do God service.

Beginning, as it did, in the days when legends were mistaken for history and when only the miraculous appealed strongely to the imagination, theology based its speculations, not upon the facts in the Nazarene's biographies, but upon the legends with which early Christians had affectionately and in all innocence embroidered the facts. Legends, not facts, made the rabbi of Nazareth a god. Once he became a god, new legends arose, from which in turn arose new dogmas. Must he not

have been supernaturally born? Must he not have performed miracles? Must not his death have meant a reconciliation between God and man? To answer these questions theology propounded dogma after dogma. Then, by way of harmonizing its dogmas one with another, it created additional dogmas and a gigantic, high-towering metaphysical system to contain them all, and a dogma of scriptural infallibility for the system containing them all to rest upon.

From top to bottom there was nothing real in any of this. Hence the warnings, later on, from such theologians as the great Hugo of St. Victor. Any one reading the Bible all through with an open mind would have seen how imaginary was the system's foundation, how imaginary was the system itself, and how imaginary were the dogmas that composed it, so no one must read the Bible all through with an open mind. The reader must first learn what was to be believed. Then, whenever the Bible told him plainly that no such thing could be believed, he must twist the text into conformity with dogma.

In the goodness of his heart Hugo of St. Victor

commanded this. He was not dishonest. Yet we have no difficulty in detecting the motive which, little though he realized it, prompted him to warn his contemporaries against reading the Bible with an open mind. It was a motive common among theologians—namely, fear. That gigantic, high-towering metaphysical system upon which Hugo of St. Victor thought men's salvation depended—how frail his warning acknowledged it to be!

Throughout its history theology has tacitly, but unmistakably, confessed a profound uneasiness. It has been for ever arguing itself into accepting itself. Whole libraries of apologetics attest its nervousness, its dread that the gigantic, high-towering metaphysical system might fall by its own weight. In every new advance of learning it has seen a foe. Geography, astronomy, geology, archæology, anthropology, meteorology, chemistry, physics, surgery, philology, biology and modern Biblical research—at one time or another, it has attacked them all, not because it abhorred truth, but because it trembled for its own exceedingly precarious existence. And there have been crises,

best forgotten, when, not from cruelty but from fright, it could resort to violence.

To-day, it faces a real foe—religion. For a strange anomaly is our so-called Age of Doubt. Formerly there were men who, beholding the gigantic, high-towering system of dogmas, complained that it was too big; we hear a new complaint now—that it is too little!

It teaches that once, very long ago and in an out-of-the-way country, God descended to earth. Whereas, in our so-called Age of Doubt, we are unable to believe that God was ever absent from any part of his universe.

It teaches that once, very long ago and in an out-of-the-way country, God expressed himself in terms of humanity. Whereas, in our so-called Age of Doubt, we are unable to believe that God ever ceases to express himself in terms of humanity. We are his children. In him we live, move, and have our being.

It teaches that once, very long ago, and in an out-of-the-way country, God demonstrated the power of divine will by interfering with natural law. Whereas, in our so-called Age of Doubt, we

are unable to believe that interfering with natural law could demonstrate the power of divine will, for we are unable to believe that natural law can be interfered with. Natural law and the power of divine will are to us the same thing.

Finally, it teaches that once, very long ago and in an out-of-the-way country, God reconciled himself to his children by sacrificing his own son. Whereas, in our so-called Age of Doubt, we are unable to believe that God was ever estranged from his children. God is love.

We are great heretics. Granted. Theologically, we are lost. Rocks and stars and living things have taught us—these and the hearts of men—until there is more belief, actually, in our so-called Age of Doubt than there was in the Age of Faith. There is more religion.

And we see that all this has come to pass, not in spite of doubt, but because of it. Doubt brings faith. Itself fearless, it brings a faith that knows no fear. So, in our study of the Bible, we no longer feel constrained to obey Hugo of St. Victor and learn first what is to be believed. We no longer begin with conclusions. We no longer decide

beforehand and twist Scripture to fit our own theories. We no longer forbid the Bible to speak until theologians have told it what to say. We no longer heed the theologians' warning against the pitfalls that beset the path of human reason. Rocks and stars and living things have taught us that truth is reasonable.

For so it is, and never more reasonable than when, in a spirit wholly modern, we rid our minds of all theological prepossessions and let Scripture speak for itself. Myth, legend, and metaphysical speculation vanish, and, in the same Bible where theologians have found only dogmas with which to hide him, the Nazarene stands revealed, promising salvation, though on one condition only—obedience to his commands.

It is a solemn experience, this of beholding the man himself. It is an experience for which most men are unprepared, and it brings them at first a sensation not so much of discovery as of being discovered. Across the centuries the Nazarene seems to ask them why they have been afraid ere this to acknowledge that myth was myth, that legend was legend, that unwarranted and unwarrantable spec-

ulation was unwarranted and unwarrantable speculation, and afraid, therefore, to seek the man himself. Here was the light of the world—real! Here was the way, the truth, and the life—real! Here was the master—real! Well might he have cried out as of old, "O ye of little faith!"

THE END

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